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palmtop user

The magazine for handheld computers & communicators

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Any contributions of material published within the pages of Palmtop User (excluding Q&A) will earn the author a minimum of one free issue added to their subscription. If you wish to write feature articles for the magazine then please contact the Publishing Editor to discuss your ideas. Good rates are paid for all material published.

Subscriptions

Palmtop User is available by subscription only from the address given above, price £24 within the UK or £27 worldwide. Price covers six issues and all postage (and airmail costs for European/worldwide subscriptions). VAT (purchase tax) is not payable on Palmtop User. Payment for subscriptions or back issues can be made by cheque or Money Order (payable to 'PALMTOP PUBLICATIONS') in UK FUNDS ONLY. Payments can also be made using Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Eurocard, Delta, JCB, Access, Solo, Visa Electron and Switch cards. Please call, fax, post or email your card details.

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EDITORIAL

When compiling the editorial for each issue, it's usually a matter of considering one aspect of the handheld computing world that's been on my mind a lot recently.

This time around, the issue of falling PDA prices is most definitely my hot topic. When I bought myself a new handheld only two months ago, I was overjoyed to find the palmtop of my dreams (well, almost) for under £300. Comparing this with the last PDA I purchased, around 15 months earlier and at almost £500, my latest workhorse felt like a positive bargain.

Looking through back issues of Palmtop User, a quick flick over the reviews in issue 1 revealed an average PDA price somewhere in the region of £450, with several models at £600 to 800+. So, in little more than a year, the average cost of a handheld computer has dropped by at least one third, often much more.

As technology advances, it's inevitable that we'll get more for our money, whether it be more memory or a built-in camera, but I can't help thinking that it's really a lower price point that's going to drive PDA sales forwards, rather than enhanced functionality. Yes, streaming video, MP3 and wireless capabilities are compelling reasons to buy for a small percentage of consumers, but it's the bottom line price that keeps much of the potential PDA market from taking the plunge.

At £600, first time buyers will often be considering a cheap laptop as an alternative to a PDA, or at that price will simply do without either. At £300, it's a whole different scenario, and with a decent number of handhelds around (or even below) the £100 mark, we're getting into the territory of impulse purchases. At £600, or even £400, most people try to find a compelling reason to buy *before* making the purchase—at half that much they're more willing to buy one just to find out whether they prefer it to their filofax.

So, amid the deluge of integral Wi-Fi, built-in video and gigabyte mass storage, my bet is that it's the falling cost of handhelds that'll ultimately make them as ubiquitous as the desktop PC.

Of the many PDAs I've owned over the past 20 years, my latest sub-£300 device is undoubtedly the most powerful of the bunch—but the best news is that when taking inflation into account, it's also the one that's made the smallest dent in my wallet.

Steve Clack - February 2004

Palmtop User is...

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Thanks to all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine. Thanks also to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

Printed by Century Web

Handheld News

What's new in the world of handheld computing

Psion sells out

Psion has sold, subject to Symbian partner approval, its 31% stake in Symbian to Nokia, which now has a 63% share. It's too early to say whether this is healthy or unhealthy for Symbian, but at least all companies involved are now active developers.

www.symbian.com

HP hangs onto handheld lead

Adding up sales of all models in its handheld range, HP managed to stay in the overall lead in Europe, the Middle East and Asia (EMEA) in the last quarter of 2003. In this period, over 400,000 iPAQs were sold, compared to just over 300,000 Palm-branded devices. In third place was Sony Ericsson, selling just under 220,000 of its Symbian-powered P800 and P900. Fourth was Medion, a Pocket PC maker, selling just under 140,000, and in fifth comes Sony, selling just over 75,000 Clie handhelds. Interestingly, all these figures are somewhat dwarfed by Nokia, with over 1.7 million sales of its low-end Series 60 smartphones.

www.canalys.com

Enter the media device

Rolling smartphone, handheld and multimedia technology into one (and roughly competing with Sony Ericsson's P900) is Nokia's new 7700 (below). This is based on Nokia's new touch-screen interface, Series 90, and will have a 640x320

screen, 64MB of memory, GPRS, handwriting recognition, an onscreen/virtual keyboard and various extra hardware keys. On the multimedia side, there's a VGA camera and even an FM radio. We'll give the 7700 a full review in the next issue.

www.nokia.com

Strangely familiar SPV M1000

Orange has added its own take on the O_2 Xda II, with the SPV M1000, marketed at businesses, adding Orange Backup, Orange Update, Office Freedom and Line 2 to the Xda II's feature set.

www.business.orange.co.uk

Sign of the Zodiac

Tapwave's high-end Palm OS handheld, masquerading as a portable games console, has surfaced under the name Zodiac. The top model has 128MB of RAM and costs around $400. All the usual Palm OS software and add-ons are included, plus two dedicated Zodiac games titles. Currently available solely in the USA, European release is currently slated for late this year.

www.tapwave.com

Next generation MMC

A new MultiMediaCard specification, offering wider bus width, dual voltage operation and the highest transfer speeds available (up to 52 Mbyte/sec), has been announced. The new specification is backwards-compatible with older MMC disks. The MMC specification is the first small form factor memory card standard to define both 3.3V and 1.8V operation, important for the new generation of smartphones.

www.mmca.org

60 w.p.m. on your phone

The 10 million or so owners of Series 60 and UIQ-based Symbian smartphones can now use a full-size keyboard for text entry,

thanks to the release of free software drivers. These talk via infrared to accessories such as the Palm Wireless Keyboard, giving smartphone users the best of both worlds.

www.gootz.net/gbin/uiq

rallypilot.sourceforge.net/symbian/keyboard-symbian.html

Megapixels on SDIO

Veo has introduced a 1.3 megapixel SDIO camera for Palm OS and Pocket PC handhelds. The $100 Photo Traveler 130S also features a 180 degree swivel lens and video recording capability.

www.veo.com

Opera comes to PDAs

Opera Software has developed a new Medium Screen Resolution (MSR) optimised version of its popular web browser, which will initially ship with several boxed PDA products. MSR squeezes content to fit a typical 320 or 480 pixel wide screen without having to resort to horizontal scrolling or zooming.

www.opera.com

The A920 set free at last

Three UK has at last opened its Symbian UIQ smartphone up to third party applications, in a free firmware update that also includes the enabling of Bluetooth. It also promises infrared support, plus generic email and Internet access, as part of another, future, upgrade—see below.

www.three.co.uk

Motorola evolves

Motorola's pioneering A920 smartphone, which runs the same Symbian UIQ interface as the Sony Ericsson P900, has been updated to the A925. The main difference is in its software, which (in theory, at least) now accepts third party applications and which fully supports Bluetooth. Owners of

the A920 can get the same software as part of a firmware upgrade at a service centre.

Also announced, for later this year, is the much more compact A1000, with an upgraded, megapixel camera.

www.motorola.com/consumer
www.three.co.uk

Bluetooth comes to keyboards

Think Outside, maker of the popular Stowaway keyboards, has announced its Bluetooth Wireless Keyboard and royalty-free keyboard drivers that use the Bluetooth Human Interface Device (HID) profile. The drivers mean that Bluetooth keyboard support can be included in all future handhelds at no extra cost to the manufacturers.

www.thinkoutside.com

Low power Wi-Fi

SyChip, which makes the current SanDisk Wi-Fi card, has announced a new low power Wi-Fi version, the WLAN6065SD, optimised for PDA use. SyChip will license the design to other companies who wish to use their own branding.

www.sychip.com

More Wi-Fi delays for Palm OS

SanDisk has announced that the release of the long-awaited Palm OS 5 driver for its Wi-Fi SD card will now be delayed until the second quarter of this year. This leaves Palm OS users still without any means to add Wi-Fi to those devices that don't have the wireless technology already built-in.

www.sandisk.com

Psion screen repairs

A UK business has started offering spare parts and doing repairs for the (sadly common) screen cable failure in the Psion Series 5 and 5mx.

www.psionflexi.fsbusiness.co.uk

No PC needed?

Synosphere has announced the Blue Dock, a PDA docking station which allows it to function in a desktop environment without the need for an additional workstation or laptop. It will work with any SDIO-enabled Palm OS handheld, and can be interfaced with any full-sized monitor, keyboard, mouse or Ethernet network connection.

www.synosphere.com

New GPS solutions coming . . .

Following the imminent release of TomTom Navigator for the Palm Tungsten T3 (see page 19), a number of other high-end GPS navigation solutions are on the near horizon—all of which we hope to cover in an extended navigation feature in the next issue. These include the MiTAC Mio 168, a Pocket PC equivalent to the Palm OS Garmin iQue 3600, with an integral GPS receiver and antenna. Also, Navman has announced the upcoming release of advanced GPS solutions for both Pocket PC and Palm OS 5 handhelds: the GPS4410 and GPS4460.

www.mitac.com
www.navman.com

Wi-Fi Asus

Asus has launched its first Wi-Fi handheld, the MyPal A716. This also has Bluetooth, giving the best of both worlds. Powered by a 400MHz processor and with 64MB of RAM, the A716 also has dual (CF/SD) expansion slots and a 4Mbps infrared port.

uk.asus.com

Wireless iPAQ 6000

Although we don't normally listen too much to rumours, we were interested to see leaked publicity photos of a possible iPAQ 6000 recently. This is claimed to have full telephony, in addition to top-end Pocket PC specifications.

www.pocketpcitalia.com

Cobalt and Garnet announced

PalmSource has announced Palm OS Cobalt (formerly known as Palm OS 6), a complete rewrite of the operating system. New benefits include multitasking, multithreading, memory protection, support for more memory and larger screens. In addition, it provides graphics and multimedia features derived from the Be OS, which Palm acquired in 2001.

Also announced was Palm OS Garnet, an update of Palm OS 5 to incorporate better support for different screen resolutions and a dynamic input area.

www.palmsource.com

Palm OS 6 to drop Mac support

PalmSource has revealed that Palm OS Cobalt will no longer offer direct synchronization with Mac OS or a Macintosh Palm Desktop, due to heavy reworking of how HotSync Manager and the PIM applications work. Fortunately, a third party, Mark/Space has stepped into the breach, promising a Cobalt version of its Missing Sync software, to sync handhelds over USB, network, Wi-Fi or Bluetooth.

www.markspace.com

Light Fantastic

Palm OS owners can now replace the standard alarm sounds (plus ring tones on the Treo 600) with the MP3 clip of their choice, with the launch of LightWav, from the same developer as the Pocket Tunes MP3 music player.

www.tosoft.ca

Symbian OS 8.0

Symbian has announced its OS version 8.0, with new support for 'single core' processors (integrated telephony and application processing), substantially reducing the cost of building smartphones, plus upgraded multimedia support, for high performance video streaming. In line with Palm OS and Pocket PC, it also now supports SDIO,

opening the door for features such as digital TV tuning.

Power Nokia

Nokia has announced the 9500 Communicator, a major update to its ageing 9200 line. The 9500 will be tri-band and support E-GPRS (EDGE), Bluetooth and Wi-Fi networking. Built on Symbian OS 7.0S, there's now USB connectivity, full support for all modern mobile messaging, video and audio standards, 80MB of user memory and the Opera 6 browser in ROM. The new communicator is expected to be available in volume during the fourth quarter of 2004 at around €800.

www.nokia.com

And for Clie owners with deep pockets...

Sony has released the PEGA-VR100K, a solid-state video recording device that is programmed using a Clie handheld and which can save digital video directly to Memory Stick. Put this card back into your Clie and you've got an hour's worth of TV per 128MB of card. The only snag is the price—a whopping $300.

www.sonystyle.com

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THE BIT BOX

A quick look at some of the latest PDA-related accessories and gadgets...

Wireless printer

If your PDA supports direct printing and is equipped with Bluetooth, you can make life easy by investing in a Bluetooth adaptor for your home or office printer. The **Troy WindConnect II** makes the process incredibly easy, with a mains-powered Bluetooth adaptor that simply plugs into your printer's Centronics (parallel) port. It also works with suitably-equipped mobile phones, digital cameras, laptop and desktop computers, of course, and with handhelds, up to a range of around five metres or so. You'll need suitable Bluetooth-enabled print software to go with it—we tested the unit with PrintBoy (for both Palm OS and Pocket PC, from *www.bachmannsoftware.com*) and it worked first time. There's absolutely nothing to configure on the adaptor itself, it's just a matter of setting your print software to use whatever printer is attached to the WindConnect. £85.

www.troygroup.com

The great protector

Are screen protectors really a good idea? These thin plastic films certainly prevent the unwanted scratches that otherwise inevitably appear after heavy use, particularly if you have a penchant for games that involve a lot of screen tapping. The biggest problem is that many screen protectors are inordinately difficult to apply without trapping little air bubbles underneath. Also, some cheap ones give the screen a rather scratchy feel, and some become scratched themselves after a month or so of use, making it necessary to change them regularly. Some also tend to lift up at the edges after a period of use, again requiring replacement.

The best examples we've tried to date are the Covertec range, which are relatively thick and seem almost to pull themselves onto the PDA screen when applied, with no air bubbles in sight. We've also found that after more than five months of heavy use, they seem to show no visible signs of wear. The only downside (as with most protectors) is that the screen brightness is reduced a little by the presence of the film, but this doesn't present a problem with the latest, bright colour screens. Available for most current PDA models, at €15 for a pack of two protectors.

www.covertec.com

Portable Palm power

It's frustrating to see that most handheld manufacturers see add-on battery packs as an easy source of profit, with some charging as much as £100 for a model-specific spare battery. At £59 inc. VAT the **Palm Power-to-go Recharging Sled** is still expensive, but it can recharge your handheld at least once, and up to three times on older models with more modest power demands. It works by trickle-charging your standard, internal battery, just as though it were attached to your HotSync cradle.

Another good point is that it works with any Palm model that uses the standard Universal Connector: the m500, m505, m515, m130, Zire 71 and the entire Tungsten range (apart from the budget Tungsten E), giving it some degree of future-proofing.

The unit itself is charged by putting it into your HotSync cradle rather than via its own mains adaptor—so if you're travelling you'll need to take a cradle along in order to use the sled, the only downside to this otherwise excellent solution.

www.palmone.com

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since 1999 with opinion and views

www.palmaddicts.blogspot.com

reviews

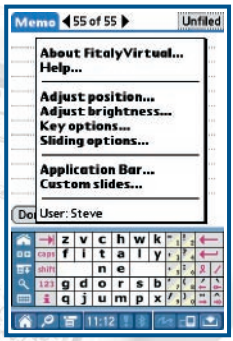
Palm OS SOFTWARE

We take a look at the latest software for your Palm OS handheld or communicator...

A new agenda

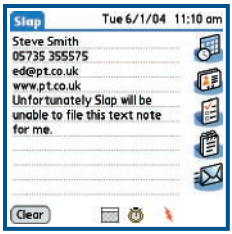
An ever-popular alternative to the built-in Palm OS PIM applications, **Agendus** (previously Action Names Datebook) is now up to version 7, with full support for the larger screens of various new models and the new Outlook-friendly fields of the Palm T3 and Tungsten E. Amongst the long list of other enhancements is the ability to use more than one database of icons to embellish your calendar, an expanded month view and improved control over the appearance of each separate calendar view. Agendus has always managed to present the maximum amount of information in an elegant and uncluttered fashion, and the new version is particularly impressive in this area. As an alternative to the Standard Edition ($25), the Professional Edition ($40) adds integrated email support via Iambic's own mail client, as well as SMS text messaging. Both from *www.iambic.com*.

Speedy keyboard



Another significant update for Palm T3 owners, the highly optimised Fitaly keyboard is now available in a **FitalyVirtual T3** edition that pops up at the bottom of the T3 screen in place of the standard keyboard layout. As the Fitaly literature says, this alternative input method speeds up text entry by grouping commonly-used letters together into a central cluster, which minimises hand movements while 'typing'. With 73% of the letters in normal English language text grouped into 10 central keys, it's quite practical to achieve speeds of 50-60 words per minute with a little practice. As with the earlier Sony Clie FitalyVirtual, there's a simple file launcher utility built in, plus access to *any* accented or special character via only two screen taps. $25, from *www.fitaly.com*.

Data funnel



A novel and original idea, **Slap** lets you scribble down quick notes directly into its Memo Pad-like data entry screen, without a thought for where that data ultimately needs to be put. Once entered, a series of icons down the right side of the screen allow you to transfer the text to any of the Palm OS PIM applications (or to email) with just a few screen taps. The useful part is that Slap will try to 'intelligently' format and place the text for you. For example, if you enter a name, email address and phone number into a free-form Slap note, a quick tap of the appropriate icon will dump the text into the 'Last', 'First', 'Work' (phone) and 'Email' fields of a new Address Book entry. The whole thing tends to lose its way if you fail to start each item on a new line, but otherwise the process is fairly reliable, though by no means foolproof (there's no support for the Note field of an address entry, for instance). Thankfully, the data appears in an editable screen before you commit to sending it to its final location, but by the time you've rearranged any mis-placed items the initial speed benefit of Slap can sometimes be lost. Things work better with items destined for Date Book, To Do List and Memo Pad entries, with Slap prompting you for appropriate category information and appointment details where necessary. $13, from *www.handshigh.com*.

Address control

Like virtually every other PDA-based address book application, the one built into Palm OS handhelds is ill-equipped when it comes to editing more than one address at a time, or even deleting multiple entries. For those times when your contact details need a little massaging, **ezMaintain** can save you a lot of work. The program's main screen shows a list of all your address entries, with a checkbox next to each. Once you've flagged the entries you want to work on, you can then delete them all with a single tap, change their category, toggle their privacy status, change which phone number is displayed as the default, or send the selected addresses to another computer via infrared, Bluetooth, SMS or email. Even more powerful, there's a Find and Replace function that can be set to search for specific text or numbers in any or all fields, and even re-categorise or delete those addresses containing the selected text. For cases when a city changes its area code or all the contacts at a given address need to be edited or deleted, ezMaintain saves a good deal of record-by-record editing. Although its contact list can show name and company details, there's no option to browse entire address details from within ezMaintain, nor to step through your selected items to confirm the chosen editing or deletion operation before you commit to it. It's therefore important to be *very* sure of what you're doing before pressing the 'OK' button, but within that caveat, ezMaintain is a great utility. $10, from *www.pdaperformance.com*.

Fancy alarms

It's a long-standing quirk that Palm OS devices don't incorporate a dedicated multi-alarm clock application. This would avoid cluttering up your Date Book with wake-up calls and reminders to take daily medication. The brand new **PalmaryClock** is one of many standalone alarm clock applications, but one of only a tiny handful to include full-screen support for the latest

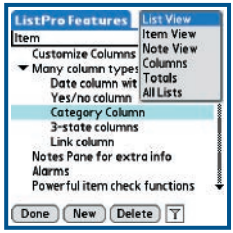
high-resolution devices. The impressive feature list includes up to 65,535 independent, repeatable alarms(!), world time clock with editable cities, sunrise/sunset time display and a beautiful on-screen clock or calendar that can be activated automatically whenever the handheld is placed on its Hotsync cradle. Just to round things off, there are currently nine alternative clock skins downloadable from the PalmaryClock web site, together with at least 75 great-looking background images at a variety of resolutions. You can add your own JPEG background images if you prefer, present a slideshow of images automatically, and the on-screen calendar display can be set to any month between 1904 and 2031. $10, from *www.palmarysoft.com*.

Fullscreen calculator

Always a good general-purpose calculator application, **MegaCalc** is one of the very first to add full-screen support for the new 320x480 pixel Palm OS devices. There are separate screens for a basic calculator, scientific/engineering, 22 unit conversion types, plus currency, tip and mortgage calculators. There's plenty of configurability all round, coupled with an exceptionally handsome interface. $15, from *www.megasoft2000.com*.

Outlines and databases

The ubiquitous **ListPro** has always been a hard product to pidgeonhole into a specific category, and the new version 4 is even more powerful, which makes the job virtually impossible. Best described as a list manager-cum-outliner, the program now does so much that it has most of the functionality of a basic database application as well. Amongst the many improvements in this version are an excellent new filtering system and a wizard-like setup process to simplify the creation of new custom lists. As before, each list item can incorporate any combination of fields, including priorities, dates, numeric values (useful for prices, etc.), two-way or three-way flags, category popups, yes/no fields and free-form note fields. Lists on the handheld can be synchronized to a companion Windows desktop application if desired, available at a small extra cost. An amazingly versatile tool for anyone who makes a lot of lists. $20 from *www.iliumsoft.com*, or $30 with Windows desktop companion. Also available for Pocket PC and Microsoft Smartphones.



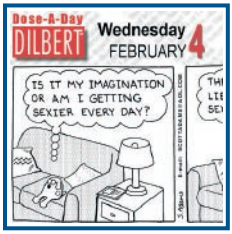
Talking maps

One of a number of new high-end route planning and navigation products due over the next few months (and to be covered in a full roundup in the next issue), TomTom's brand new **Navigator** for the Palm Tungsten T3 improves on the Pocket PC version with a new, enhanced interface and much faster route planning—up to 10 times faster, in fact. It uses the same data set as before, with a few quirks such as missing place names (in the extremities of the UK, at least) and some out-of-date postcodes,

but overall the software is very impressive, even in the pre-release version submitted for this review. Supplied in various international versions, the UK edition includes a 128MB SD card containing the software and maps, together with a car mounting kit, GPS receiver and cables. Prices start at €349, from *www.tomtom.com*.

Daily Dilbert

Something to add a little fun to your handheld, **Dose-A-Day Dilbert** gives you a calendar that pops up a cartoon strip from the popular Dilbert series every day for a full year after installation. It can be set up to appear on your first power-up of the day, every time the device is switched on, or at a specified time. It can also be invoked manually, and to launch whenever the handheld is placed on its sync cradle. You use scroll buttons to move through the three frames of each cartoon, and can browse through recent days' strips. There's no cheating by reading through the whole year's worth in advance though, as the (Windows PC only) installation routine uses HotSync to load up only a few days' cartoons at a time. If you want to keep selected cartoons, you can add them to a favourites list that can then be browsed at leisure. It's a pity the calendar doesn't have at least a month view option to give the program a little *real* functionality, but otherwise the product is nicely done. Also available in Golf calendar and 'Close To Home' cartoon versions, and also available for Pocket PC. $20, from *www.dataviz.com*.



Icons galore

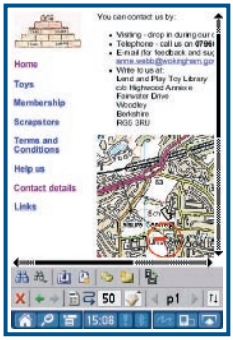
If you like to add icons to identify your Agendus or DateBk5 appointments and to do items, you may find the default batch a little unimaginative.

The **Brandnew Hi-Res icons set** offers over 1000 alternative icons spanning 10 categories, from finance to project planning, and also works with Datashield, Handyshopper and MonthPlanner. The nice thing is that you get to choose exactly which ones you wish to add, rather than being forced to overwrite your existing set with a mountain of icons you don't need. The artwork is all top-notch quality, and looks particularly good on hi-res colour devices. If you don't need the full set, themed packs are available separately in hi-res, low-res and monochrome versions, with others in the older DateBk4/DateBk3 format. $6 for the full hi-res set of 1000 (see special offer at bottom of opposite page), from *www.twokidsinagarage.com*.

New RepliGo

The next-generation of the popular **RepliGo** document viewing system has been made available first for Palm OS. Fans of the first version will remember that one of the clever bits about the system was the way in which documents are created: making a RepliGo document from *any* Windows application is simply a matter of clicking on the 'Print' button, it being implemented as a standard printer driver. Once on your Palm (or Pocket PC or smartphone, etc.), the document can be zoomed into or viewed in a special

'flowed-text' mode. Version 2.0 seems to have sorted out all the omissions in the original, including extensive bookmarking and annotating functions. These stay largely on the handheld, by definition, although it's also possible to open up backed-up RepliGo for Palm documents



in the new standalone RepliGo Viewer for Windows, whereupon your bookmarks and comments are accessible and editable. Also new are a proper text search function, a 'Copy' function to the Palm OS clipboard and full category support. In addition, large documents can now be HotSynced to expansion card and opened directly. Finally, the 256-colour dithering of version 1 is long gone, with full 24-bit colour throughout, making RepliGo much more useful for documents which include photographic material. $30, from *www.cerience.com*.

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Also for Palm OS...

The following programs reviewed in the Symbian and Pocket PC software review sections are also available in Palm OS versions:

Pocket Verifier Professional- page 24
PhonTuner - page 24
Mobile Mechanic (via Java) - page 24
WorldMate - page 31

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Series 3c	1MB		£110
	2MB		£120
Series 3mx	2MB	£75	£165
Revo	8MB	£45	£95
Revo Plus	16MB	£65	£140
Series 5	8MB	£55	£115
Series 5mx	16MB	£85	£185
Series 7	16MB	£175	£325

ACCESSORIES		We Buy	We Sell
PC link cable	3a		£35
PsiWin + cables	3a (v1.0)		£40
	3c/mx/5 (v2.2)	£10	£35
Psion IR Travel Modem	3c/mx/5	£10	£45
PC Card Modem Adaptor	3a/3c/mx/5	£15	£45
Dacom Gold Card 34k	3a/c/mx/5		£15
Dacom Gold Card 56k	3a/c/mx/5		£30
AC adaptor	5/5mx		£10
Leather case			£5-20
Wide range of manuals			£10
Cyclone External Floppy	3c/mx/5	£30	£75

MEMORY		We Buy	We Sell
Flash SSD	256K		£12
	512K		£20
	1MB		£35
	2MB		£50
RAM SSD	512K		£40
	1MB		£65
CF Disk (S5/5mx)	32MB	£5	£18
	64MB	£10	£25
	128MB	£15	£40
Other sizes		£phone	£phone

SOFTWARE - Series 3		We Buy	We Sell
AutoRoute Express	SSD		£5
Berlitz Phrasebook	SSD		£10
Games 1/2/3a	SSD		£5

SOFTWARE - Series 5mx		We Buy	We Sell
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Allegro	disk	£2	£10
Backgammon	CD	£10	£30
Collins Dictionary	CD	£10	£25
Chess	CD	£10	£30
Games Arcade	CD	£5	£15

Non-Psion handhelds

PALM	We Buy	We Sell
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Palm m505	£30	£75
Palm m515	£35	£75
Palm Tungsten T	£60	£125
Palm Tungsten T|2	£95	£195
Palm Tungsten T|3	£120	£225
POCKET PC		
iPAQ 3870	£95	£195
iPAQ 3950	£105	£210
iPAQ 5450	£190	£295
iPAQ 5550	£260	£375

SONY (PALM OS)	We Buy	We Sell
Sony CLIE SJ-22	£65	£135
Sony CLIE TG-50	£105	£220
Sony CLIE NZ90	£145	£250
Sony CLIE UX50	£250	£390
POCKET PC		
HP Jornada 720	£110	£225
HP Jornada 560	£70	£160
HP Jornada 568	£60	£130
HP Jornada 565	£55	£120
Toshiba e570	£65	£135
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Symbian SOFTWARE

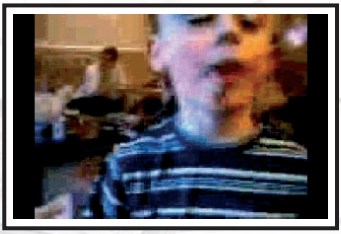
A roundup of the latest software releases for your Symbian communicator

Privacy matters

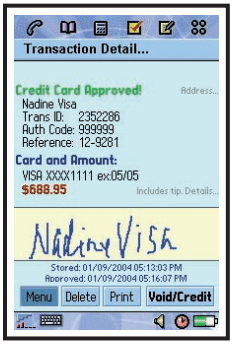
Given UIQ's Palm OS-like interface, in which files are mostly organised invisibly for you, it was always going to be interesting to see how third party developers managed to implement an all-purpose encryption utility. SymbianWare has done a good job with **PowerProtect**, using the same classifications as UIQ itself, with tabs for pictures, sounds, video clips, documents (though only those in named folders) and 'custom'. From this last tab, you can select any file using a traditional hierarchical folder browser. Once selected, items are remembered and handled by PowerProtect while in locked-down state and by your regular applications while unlocked. PowerProtect does its best not to get in the way. You only need to enter your master password when starting the utility, with all operations after that, including opening encrypted items, performed quickly and intuitively. Encryption and decryption speeds are around 20 seconds per megabyte, quite acceptable on this class of device. €15, from *www.symbianware.com*.

The P800 gets a camcorder

It was probably only a matter of time before the Sony Ericsson P800 acquired the same video recording facilities as its newer sibling, the P900. In fact, although **Philips Camcoder** (sic) does much the same job, it's from a different developer and uses a slightly different file format, although still within the 3GP/MP4 stable. Don't get too excited, by the way—as with the P900, video recording is at very low resolution (160x120 pixels) and strictly for 'fun' use. The clips look acceptable when played back on the smartphone itself, especially in 'wide-screen' mode, but utterly horrible on a full size display. You're also limited to 15 seconds at a time, though this isn't a huge problem given the focus on fun. Camcoder is also available for Series 60 devices, although there it's pitched against Nokia's own freeware recording utility. $30, from *www.handango.com*.

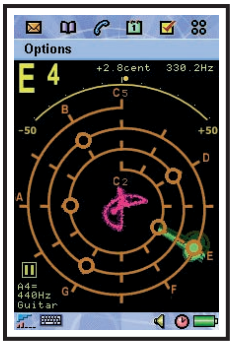


Sell from anywhere



Armed with this kit, you can accept credit card payments for anything, anywhere, even in a moving vehicle. **Pocket Verifier Professional** (also available for Palm OS and Pocket PC) is a complete wireless e-commerce solution for the really ambitious salesperson, connecting via Bluetooth to the popular Pocket Spectrum card reader and thermal printer. Just about every feature you could demand from a traditional desk-bound system is here, including address verification, full encryption throughout and signature capture, via the P800 or P900 touch-screen, of course. $40, from *www.merchantanywhere.com/Sony_Ericsson*, or *www.marktra.de/seite1.htm*.

Fine tuning



PhonTuner is arguably the best musician's tool yet created for a PDA. It's certainly one of the best looking, with a clever spiralling frequency scale that makes the most of the limited screen width available. There are a variety of instrument presets (guitar, violin, cello, etc.) on the main menu, each of which puts note targets on the scale. If necessary, you can even create and save your own presets and targets. Finally, when tuning, an error meter shows in detail the deviation from the closest target. The icing on the cake is a surprisingly useful visualisation in the centre of the scale, showing the purity and character of the sound being analysed. PhonTuner is also available for Palm OS and Pocket PC. $18, from *www.phonature.com*.

MP3, eat your heart out

MP3 is such a recognised standard for digital music that it's quite a wrench to consider using anything else. But the oddly-named *Ogg Vorbis* format claims to be so much more efficient than MP3 that it deserves checking out. The freeware **OggPlay** is what makes this possible on a UIQ device, playing back music in near-CD quality with a bit rate of only 64kbps (kilobits per second), half of that needed by MP3. For the P800 and P900, currently limited to 128MB expansion cards by the Memory Stick Duo format, OggPlay means up to four hours of music rather than two—quite an improvement. Like the built-in Audio application, OggPlay works quite happily in flip-closed mode, and makes your smartphone a pretty capable music source. Freeware, from *www.geocities.com/p800tools*.

On hand when you need it

Mobile Mechanic is a comprehensive reference application designed to guide you through many aspects of car use and problems, with over 150 screens of advice and tips, many of which are illustrated with useful photos and diagrams. Topics include standard maintenance procedures, diagnosis of various car troubles, and

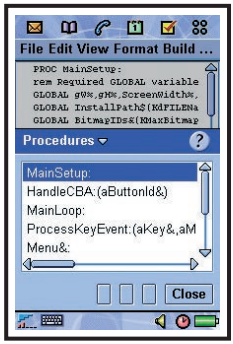
breakdown and recovery advice. There's also a handy interactive journey checklist and plenty of good advice on buying and selling a car, plus screens to store important motoring data such as insurance and recovery details. Unusually, Mobile Mechanic is written in Java, which means that the interface is clumsy in places, especially when choosing on-screen options. But this is a small price to pay for the tremendously useful content. $15, from *www.dynamocomputing.com*.

Shortcut to Shortcuts

It's perhaps an indication of how pervasive the Windows PC desktop has become that so many developers feel a need to produce something similar for UIQ. **Handy Desktop** joins the fray late in the day, but scores highly by not trying to be too ambitious, unlike Tracker and Active Desk. It's unashamedly a place to put shortcuts to the things you want to do most often, perhaps a new text message to a friend, a call to your partner, editing a specific file or visiting a favourite web page. You can have as many pages (folders) of shortcuts as you like, each with their own wallpaper, which helps to give an appropriate vibe. The range of possibilities is impressive, although you do have to keep returning to the desktop manually, as there's no option to switch automatically when opening the P800/P900 flip. $15, from *www.epocware.com*.

Another step for OPL

OPL, the programming language that was built into several million Psion handhelds and which was the basis for thousands of shareware applications, has taken its bravest step yet, into true smartphone territory. OPL is now available for UIQ, with full support for touch-screen taps, dialogs and multimedia. The language is very similar to BASIC and enables applications to be developed in minutes or hours rather than weeks. The UIQ implementation even includes a Program editor, for development on your P800/P900 directly, perhaps with the aid of an infrared keyboard. Free, from *opl-dev.sourceforge.net*.



Don't forget that message!

Text messaging (SMS) can be a very useful medium for receiving important messages without having your day interrupted. For example, "Meeting rearranged for 3pm, see you there". The only snag is that if your phone is set to 'Silent' or you're in a noisy environment it's likely that you'll miss your standard

'message received' sound. Sitting in an empty meeting room at 4pm, you happen to notice the 'Message' icon in the status bar, but of course it's now too late. **SMSReminder** is a simple utility that sits in memory (taking only 64k) and nags you at your chosen interval with your chosen sound file (and a brief pop-up dialog if your flip is open). It works well in practice and even autostarts when your UIQ device is powered on, saving you having to remember to start it manually. €10, from *www.symbianware.com*.

Psion images

With the excellent MBMView no longer supported following the death of its author, Psion users have been left a little short of choice on image viewing software. **Imaging** tries to fill that gap, with a fairly basic but serviceable JPEG and MBM file viewer that runs on all ER5 devices (not the original Psion Series 5 and Geofox One). The software also works with native Psion Sketch and AIF files, can zoom, flip, rotate, resize and crop images, change the colour depth where appropriate, and works as a simple slideshow application. The program is fairly slow in operation, and tends to fall over if presented with large JPEGS, but if you keep your file sizes down to kilobytes rather than megabytes, it works reliably. Free, from *www.freepoc.org*.

Also for Symbian...

RepliGo, reviewed for Palm OS on page 20 is also available in Symbian Series 60 and UIQ versions.

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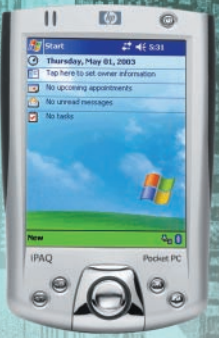

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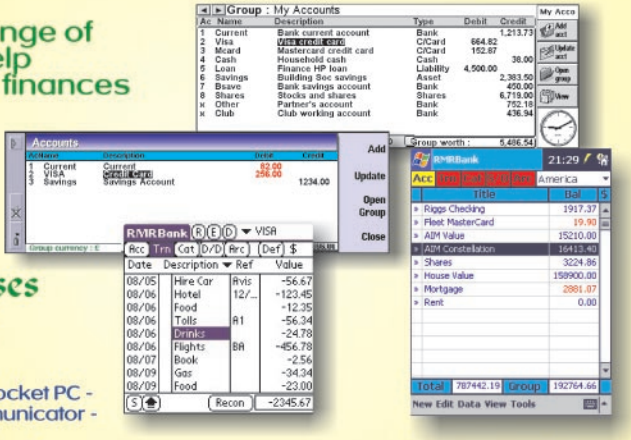

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- Palm - Nokia Communicator -

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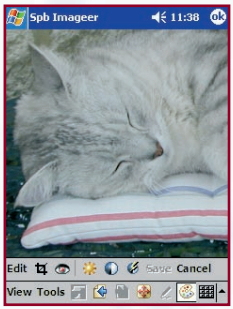
Pocket PC SOFTWARE

Some of the most interesting new software additions for your Pocket PC handheld or communicator...

Little photo shop



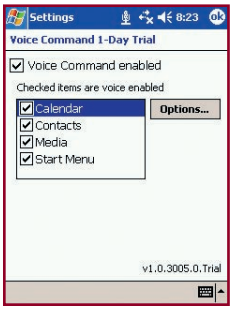
There are plenty of good photo viewing and slideshow applications available for your Pocket PC, but precious few options if you want to edit the images on your handheld. The Adobe Photoshop-like Pocket Artist (*www.conduits.com*) is the ultimate solution for those with a little knowledge of high-end image editing programs, but **Spb Imageer** is the new photo editor for everyone else. Aside from the usual zoom, rotate and slideshow features, Imageer will let you crop, sharpen or blur any image. You can remove red-eye from flash photographs, adjust hue, saturation, lightness, brightness, contrast and colour levels, with separate adjustment for red, green and blue channels. If these terms are all gobbledygook to you, don't worry—each parameter is adjusted via a simple slider control, so you can use a little trial and error to figure out how everything works before finally re-saving your edited images. The program works with BMP, GIF, TIFF and PNG as well as the usual JPEGs, and incorporates a desktop conversion filter that works via ActiveSync. There's also a drawing tool for annotating or touching up images, and to cap it all off you can add text or voice notes to images and re-sample them to a smaller size to save disk space. Overall, a superb set of tools. $15, from *www.spbsoftwarehouse.com*.

New informant

It seems that hardly an issue of Palmtop User goes by when we don't cover an update to one of the two major third party Pocket PC PIM suites. Contact management, diary and to do items are the very core of any PDA's *raison d'être* though, and this new version 5.0 of **Pocket Informant** is an important upgrade. The most significant single improvement is perhaps the re-working of the program code to speed up overall operation, which gives the whole thing a noticeably snappier feel. There are plenty of other enhancements, including the option to hide unused views, much better Contact and Task views that show the contents of the note field

on the main screen, the ability to add photos to contact details and at least two dozen other improvements. $25, from *www.pocketinformant.com*.

Speak to me!

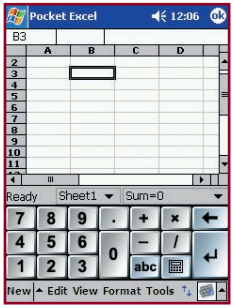


Full voice recognition for handhelds still appears to be some way off, but **Microsoft Voice Command** makes an impressive foray into this technology, with enough functionality to make it genuinely useful. The program takes around 5MB of memory space, can't be installed onto a removable storage card, and works only with Windows Mobile 2003 devices, including Phone Edition. If you're okay with all those criteria, it's well worth loading up the one day demo. The program has no requirement to 'learn' your speech patterns before use, and in fact the only setup steps are to set the microphone gain control of your Pocket PC and to assign one of your hardware buttons to activate 'listen' mode. With this done, the procedure is to press the button momentarily, which brings up a microphone icon at the top of the screen. You then have 10 seconds or so to speak your desired command.

At its simplest level, commands such as "Start Internet Explorer" and "What's my next appointment" will save you a few screen taps. Much more impressive (and time-saving) is the ability to recognise more complex commands, such as "Call John Smith at work", and "What are my appointments tomorrow?", with the latter eliciting a spoken list of your day's appointments in chronological order. Though naturally optimised for American speakers, we found the software remarkably reliable at recognising our English accents. Spoken replies from Voice Command are in an American female voice—perfectly understandable, if a little 'electronic' sounding. Recognition accuracy naturally goes haywire in noisy environments, or if you try to speak too quickly.

The only major frustration with this otherwise impressive package is the limited number of commands it can recognise. They include calling contacts, dialling numbers, showing contact details, speaking out appointments (but not Tasks, strangely), playing media selections, launching applications and offering limited help. It's realistic that the software can't accept voice dictation directly into applications, but disappointing that it can't read out a list of today's tasks, launch Inbox with a new email message to a chosen contact, or launch items from the Settings menu. Despite its limitations, the ability to find and dial contacts without having to scroll through a long list of entries is probably reason enough to try out Voice Command for yourself. $40, from *www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile*.

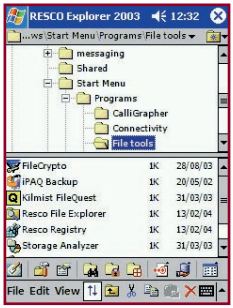
Keyboards and calculators



A logical extension to the usual pop-up keyboard metaphor, **Keyboard PRO** has not only alternative foreign language keyboard layouts as well as the usual QWERTY, but it adds a variety of numeric keypad options with nice big buttons that are just the thing for extended spreadsheet work. Going one step further, a pop-up calculator can be invoked at the bottom of the screen in place of a keyboard, for quick calculations that can

then be pasted straight into the underlying application. Skinnable to suit your personal colour preferences, the impressive feature set also includes a pop-up panel to insert 11 of your most frequently-used phrases with just two screen taps. Powerful, flexible, and indispensable for anyone who routinely writes in more than one language. $20, from *www.resco-net.com*.

File king



There are some perfectly good freeware file manager programs to replace Pocket PC's basic File Explorer, but **Resco Explorer 2003** just keeps getting better, with the new version 5's feature list now almost exhaustive. HP Mobile Printing support (via an optional free download), FTP support for any connected network devices, drag-and-drop of files and folders, storage card formatting, plus improved infrared and Bluetooth file transfers. That's all in addition to the existing multi-windowed interface, Zip compression, file encryption and registry editor. It's tough to find fault with Resco Explorer 2003, and hard not to give it an unreserved recommendation. $25, from *www.resco-net.com*.

Managing the world

Previous versions of WorldMate were certainly attractive to look at and handy to have, but there's been a lot of effort to add some significant new features into the latest version, available for Pocket PC, Palm OS, Symbian UIQ and Series 60. **Worldmate Standard Edition** combines a number of features primarily of use to the international traveller: a graphical world time display, a calculator to show the exact time and date in other locations around the globe, currency and unit convertors, country and US state dialling codes, clothing sizes and a simple packing list manager. Nothing remarkable, but nice to have all in one place nonetheless. The clever part comes from WorldMate's ability to grab the current weather forecast for the selected (major) city, via either a desktop conduit or wirelessly using a network or phone link. It'll also get the current exchange rates and *exact* time (via atomic clock) while it's at it.

Brand new, the more advanced **WorldMate Professional Edition 2004** adds a feature to (wirelessly or via synchronization) look up flight schedule details via an inclusive one year subscription to the popular OAG (Official Airline Guide). The US-centric nature of the OAG data is evident, and working with non-US flights generally requires that you know the three-letter code for the airport you're planning to fly into or out of, unless it's a very major city—the biggest overall criticism of WorldMate Professional. There's also a form-filling utility to help you enter details for hotels, car rentals and other itinerary information. This prompts for all the necessary details, which can be exported *en masse* directly to your PDA calendar application. Also in the Professional Edition, there's a handy tip calculator for major countries around the world. $25/$70, from *www.mobimate.com*.

Easy books, easy movies

It's all very well to buy a free-form database program and then configure it to keep track of your book or movie collection, but

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Also for Pocket PC...

The following programs reviewed in the Palm OS and Symbian software review sections are also available in Pocket PC versions:

Fitaly keyboard - page 17
ListPro - page 19
Navigator - page 19
Dose-A-Day Dilbert - page 20
RepliGo - page 20
Pocket Verifier Professional - page 24

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	Pro, Per	45.00	-	-
Handspring	Edge	45.00	-	-
	Visors (NOT Prism)	45.00	-	-
	Neo	45.00	-	-
Sony	Clié PEG Series	45.00	-	-
Dell	Axim X5	45.00	-	-
O2	XDA	50.00	-	-
HP	iPAQ 36xx/37xx	50.00	20.00	-

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A CLOSER LOOK

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

Star Ratings:

★★★★★	Excellent
★★★★☆	Good
★★★☆☆	Average
★★☆☆☆	Fair
★☆☆☆☆	Poor
☆☆☆☆☆	Dismal

Interpreting reviews

Quality: the Quality star rating reflects how well the product works, whether it includes all the features you'd expect, whether the interface is consistent and easy to use, and in data-based products also reflects the quality of the information contained in the program.

Value: the Value star rating reflects the value for money of the product, taken within the context of what the product does.

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Palm Zire 21

With handhelds becoming simultaneously cheaper and more powerful, existing users get plenty of choice on what to upgrade to next. More importantly for the long-term success of handhelds though, the ever-dropping price point of entry level devices is bringing new users into the fold. In the days when most PDAs were priced at £300+, there was always an inherent limit to the number of people willing to adopt handheld technology, no matter how compelling it might be.

At £79 including VAT, the Zire 21 is the lowest-priced *real* handheld computer ever, potentially opening up the world of PDAs to a mass of new users. There are naturally a good number of compromises in this device, but only one that's likely to stop any significant number of cost-conscious newcomers in their tracks.

Almost identical to the original £89 Zire in most respects, it uses the same all-plastic casing design. Considering the materials used, the silver and white livery looks surprisingly businesslike, with good quality buttons and a solid, durable feel. Supplied in a plastic 'blister' pack that looks destined for department store shelf space, the Zire 21 comes with a separate mains charger and USB sync cable, removable soft plastic flip-up screen cover, software CD and basic documentation.

Although there's no SD card expansion slot, the 8MB of internal memory will be ample for the 21's intended audience, and the inclusion of Palm OS 5.2.1 and a 126MHz ARM processor are most welcome.

The rather small 46mm (1.8") square active area of the m100-like monochrome screen does make everything a little tinier than usual, but the contrast is good. The lack of any backlight is the one economy in the Zire 21 that poses a real inconvenience to users, making it hard to use in dim lighting conditions and downright impossible when things get fairly dark. This is a real pity, as the inclusion of a backlight would have transformed the Zire into an excellent entry-level PDA. As it stands, the frustration of having an advanced electronic diary that can't be used at night may well be enough to put first-time buyers off handhelds for good.

If you're blessed with decent lighting conditions then the Zire 21 is a perfectly usable Palm OS handheld at a low price. For the rest of us, let's hope the next budget PalmOne model adds a backlight to its monochrome display, at which point it'll be much easier to recommend to newcomers.

Palm Zire 21

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.palmone.com*

Price: RRP £79 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★☆☆

Value: ★★★★☆

Sony Clie TJ27 / TJ37

Sony's marketing team certainly seem to have convinced themselves that most of us want a digital camera built into our PDAs. With the release of the new TJ27 and TJ37, replacements to the TJ25 and TJ35 (reviewed in the last issue) there are now no Clie models that don't have one. The first plain 'tablet' style Palm OS handhelds to incorporate a camera, this configuration turns out to be comfortable to use, with the standard 320x320 pixel screen acting as a giant viewfinder, with the tiny camera lens on the back, close to the lower right corner of the device. The flash-less 310,000 pixel camera (640x480 maximum resolution) gives adequate images, with white balance and brightness adjustment, plus a 2x digital zoom.

As a conventional handheld, the TJ27/TJ37 hardware is broadly on par with the Palm Tungsten E, with 32MB internal memory, Sony's own 'i.MXL' processor and similar weight and size. As per usual with Sony devices, a larger-than-normal chunk of internal memory is swallowed by the operating system, with less than 23MB available to the user. The standard Clie software suite is all there, plus Palm OS 5.2.1.

The TJ27 has no headphone socket for MP3/ATRAC playback, but the TJ37 does—together with integral Wi-Fi. The gunmetal-grey styling of these two externally identical models looks a little more sleek than their predecessors, as does the slightly more angular styling. There's no integral Bluetooth in either model, and a desktop sync cable is included rather than a full docking cradle.

The TJ27 comes with no bundled business software. It's still perfectly suitable for serious use—it's just that you'll need to buy your spreadsheet and word processor separately.

For only £70 more, the TJ37 is a good choice for business users, adding Sony's PicSel Office document viewer and Decuma handwriting recognition, as well as the aforementioned MP3 and Wi-Fi.

The inclusion of a low-performance camera in PDAs now appears to have so little impact on the purchase price that even if you have absolutely *no* need for one, it can safely be left out of the equation. Forgetting cameras entirely, the TJ27 and TJ37 are still both exceptional value for money. Provided you don't need Bluetooth and are happy with 23MB of internal memory (as all but the heaviest power-users should be), one of these two models may be just the thing for you, and if you really need a basic digital camera, so much the better.

Sony Clie TJ27/TJ37

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.sonystyle.com*

Price: RRP £169/£237 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★½☆

Value: ★★★★½

Sony Clie TH55

A departure from Sony's usual brushed aluminium finish, the handsome TH55 is finished primarily in black, with a tungsten-coloured front bezel and translucent smoked plastic flip cover. The Jog Dial, usually down the left side, has been replaced with a Clie UX50-style 'roller' to the rear of the unit, right at the top—just above the lens for the TH55's 640x480 pixel camera.

Another departure from the familiar Sony way of doing things, the TH55 runs a completely new, tabbed selector as its primary interface, beneath which lies Clie Organizer—Sony's very own PIM suite (see screen in photo below).

This completely new front-end will throw existing Palm OS users right off kilter to begin with, and indeed Clie Organizer's new way of working takes a good deal of getting used to. The concept behind it is that rather than being forced to enter appointments and notes in a regimented, text-only fashion, users might prefer the option to simply scribble things into a free-form 'diary' page, much as you would with a traditional paper organiser. To achieve this, Clie Organizer's Date Book application provides a basic set of sketching tools to allow you to draw text, graphics and doodles straight onto the virtual diary page. A narrow, scrollable window across the bottom of the screen can be set to display stored photographs, notes and any other images you might like to drag onto the page to embellish your entries. There's also a small, pre-configured set of icon-like graphics if you feel the need to add little coloured heart icons, coloured stars, etc. to your diary entries. 'Real' text is naturally supported as well, via a conventional 'Event Details' dialog.

All this emphasis on 'cutesy' icons and jottings may seem quirky, and it is. Rather than following the traditional 'Zen of Palm' in keeping things simple, Sony has created an application littered with intractable buttons, options and features. If you're prepared to persevere, it undeniably adds a degree of flexibility that's never before been available in handheld PIM applications, but Clie Organizer most certainly won't suit everyone.

Beyond Date Book, there's a new hierarchical To Do List application that permits tasks to be nested, outliner-fashion. A 'Free Notes' application can be used to create further pages of combined text, sketches, photos and even voice recordings, which can also be dragged onto the diary pages.

All this non-textual content naturally won't synchronize with traditional desktop PIMs, enough of a barrier to keep most people away from Clie Organizer, though Sony provides its own compatible desktop component as an option during installation.

Talking of options, the standard Palm OS PIM suite can (thankfully) be used in place of Clie Organizer, though this will probably be missed by novice users perusing the TH55 as a potential purchase. Instead of using Clie Organizer's tabbed interface as the 'Home' destination, you can reassign the home icon to Sony's excellent Clie Launcher, lurking in ROM.

So, at first glance the TH55 is a strange beast, but if you don't happen to like the new face, it's reassuring to know that the familiar one is all there too, ready for immediate use.

The quirkiness of the TH55 isn't limited to built-in software, though. Although the centrally rear-mounted jog roller makes it equally usable for left-handed people, it becomes obscured and thus impossible to operate when the handheld is rested on a flat surface, as are the back, left and right navigation buttons mounted adjacent to it.

Another concern is the flip-up screen cover. It *looks* very classy indeed, but it's easy to imagine a sharp knock breaking off not only the smoked plastic cover but the entire hinge mechanism, leaving behind a mangled mess.

In common with other recent high-end Clie models, Sony's Picsel Viewer, a capable solution for viewing all manner of Office documents in their native formats, comes pre-loaded into ROM, together with Clie Mail and the NetFront web browser. Decuma text input, first seen in the NX73V (see last issue) is provided as an alternative to Graffiti 2 if desired, as well as the usual pop-up keyboard at the bottom of the screen. Unusual on a £300 handheld, there's a simple USB cable in place of a HotSync cradle, though a full desktop cradle is available at extra cost.

Unlike the Palm Tungsten T3, which will inevitably be compared with the TH55, the 320x480 screen disappointingly has no landscape mode. There's also no Bluetooth, though 802.11b Wi-Fi is included.

It's good to see Wi-Fi at last incorporated into a mid-priced Palm OS handheld, and this may be a vital purchasing decision for many. It's also good to see that a full 30.5MB of the TH55's 32MB internal memory is free for storing applications and data—the most generous of any Sony handheld to date.

Sony is certainly going for some offbeat PDA designs at the moment, with the recent UX50 (reviewed in the last issue) and the TH55 at the top of that list. Both have their strengths, but ultimately they're both handhelds that you'll probably want to try out for yourself before deciding whether they suit your particular tastes.

Sony Clie TH55

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.sonystyle.com*

Price: RRP £299 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★☆☆

Value: ★★★★☆

O_2 Xda II

The original O_2 Xda (reviewed in issue 2) and its T-Mobile North American equivalent were ground-breaking as the first full-featured Pocket PCs to incorporate mobile phone functionality. Rather than being limited by the T9 text input of Pocket PC Phone Edition devices, the Xda models are much more capable, with the full Pocket PC software suite and touch screen input.

The Xda II builds on the success of the original Xda, with a better-specified handheld that will appeal to even the most demanding users. The 32MB internal memory of the first Xda (subsequently upgraded to 64MB) was only just adequate, and it's good to see that the Xda II has been fitted with 128MB—double the current norm for Pocket PCs, and packs a 400MHz XScale processor in place of the original 206MHz StrongArm. There are plenty of other improvements too, including a brighter (transreflective) screen, integral Bluetooth for connectivity (e.g. a wireless headset), built-in camera, almost 15MB of flash memory storage, and of course the updated Windows Mobile 2003 operating system.

Physically, the Xda II looks remarkably like its predecessor: just a fraction thicker, with the SDIO expansion slot at the top rather than the bottom, and a removable battery pack and camera lens to the rear. The phone antenna of the original Xda has gone, leaving no external evidence that the Xda II is indeed a mobile phone as well as a Pocket PC handheld.

Designed with easy setup in mind, configuring the unit for telephony is simplicity itself. Even following a hard reset, the unit will reconfigure itself automatically (provided an O_2 SIM card is installed, of course), leaving the user with only a few preferences to set before proceeding. As with its predecessor, using the Xda II with a different phone provider is clearly discouraged, with the unit currently sold only as part of an O_2 service contract. The Xda II is tri-band, so should work anywhere in the world with GSM/GPRS coverage.

The fact that 'smartphone' users tend to clock up more airtime than the average user clearly hasn't been lost on O_2, and the simplicity and slick integration of everything from wireless web browsing to video downloads, online newsfeeds and WAP is all designed to get you online and keep you there for as long as possible. A fast GPRS connection is naturally integrated for optimum performance, though it's an easy matter to opt for a potentially cheaper GSM connection as the default, selecting GPRS for individual online sessions only.

With such a nice big screen, the Xda II offers fewer compromises to the mobile online experience than we've ever seen in such a hybrid device. Although no better than Palm OS or Symbian equivalents when it comes to basic phone integration, there's no substitute for a large viewing area when it comes to web browsing, and the Xda II really scores here.

Telephony and communications aside, this is still a top-end Pocket PC. The generous memory and integral camera are both

useful to have, even though the flash-less 640x480 VGA resolution naturally gives only fair results. Still, even the camera is in there primarily to help keep up those airtime minutes, with MMS picture messaging as beautifully integrated as you might expect.

Essentially little more than a tweaked version of the Pocket PC Today screen, O_2's 'Active User Interface' (see screenshot opposite) simplifies access to some core features that would otherwise take a number of taps to reach, such as turning the sound on and off, accessing Bluetooth settings and getting to the various phone, messaging and Internet connectivity options. Once again, much of this is designed to make it as easy as possible to access newsfeeds, sports information and other enticing wireless services.

As a complete package, the Xda II is outstanding, with a desktop cradle (complete with second slot for charging a spare battery), headset for phone and MP3 playback (complete with built-in volume control), leather slip case with removable belt clip, spare stylus and a set of quality printed user manuals. This completeness stretches to the built-in software too, with the excellent ClearVue Office file viewer suite pre-loaded in ROM, as well as an enhanced 'Photo Contacts' application.

Criticisms? There's actually little to fault. At 190g (6.7oz) it's heavier—not to mention bigger—than anyone would like an ideal mobile phone to be, but as a high-spec Pocket PC as well, it would be churlish to complain at such a modest size/weight penalty. The usual irritation when incorporating a phone into a standard tablet-style handheld applies, with screen smudges a fact of life due to rubbing your cheek against the side of the unit while making a call. Smart users (or just those who wear heavy make-up) will undoubtedly develop a technique of holding the device a short distance from the side of the face, but this takes a little getting used to.

The Xda II's 'O2 Active User Interface' makes the device easier to use, and simplifies access to its wireless features

The combination of generous specification, tight phone/PDA integration and the completeness of what's included in the box, all contribute to putting the Xda II at the very top of the heap of current smartphone devices. If you're an existing Pocket PC user looking for a no-compromise one-box solution then this is it. If you currently use a Palm OS or Symbian smartphone, the Xda II is still worthy of a long, hard look.

O_2 Xda II

From: Major phone dealers (see opposite)

Contact: *www.o2.co.uk*

Price: ~£250-£350 including contract

Quality: ★★★★★

Value: ★★★★½

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HP iPAQ h4150

The new iPAQ 4150 looks very much like an exercise in squeezing as much functionality as possible into the smallest Pocket PC package. Within a tiny casing, similar to the entry level HP 1910 and 1940 models of last year, the 4150 manages to shoehorn in 57MB of memory and 3MB of flash memory, together with *both* Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

This is a significant combination, as the only handheld devices previously fitted with both wireless technologies as standard were the rather bulky HP 5450 and 5550 models. At only 130g (4.6oz), the 4150 is less than two-thirds the weight, and lacks the ungainly stub antenna of the older models.

Wireless capabilities aside, this is a fairly unremarkable Pocket PC. The usual Windows Mobile 2003 software suite is all present and correct, with HP's own capable application launcher built in.

The styling of the diminutive 4150 has been refined a little over the earlier 1900 series, with a smoother, less fussy design and smoother edges. Overall size is comparable with modern Palm OS devices—a far cry from the bulky, ugly Pocket PC boxes of the past. The small casing does cramp the hardware buttons a little, and the common gripe of an under-sized five-way navigation button definitely applies here, though at least it's fairly positive in operation.

The use of a removable battery pack (now standard on HP devices) is a welcome addition, as is the full desktop docking cradle, spare (metal) stylus and substantial nylon slip case.

With its 400MHz XScale processor, the only thing that bars the HP 4150 from absolute top-end Pocket PC status is its sub-64MB memory, as opposed to the 128MB complement now starting to appear on other state-of-the-art devices. The usual 240x320 screen is naturally a few millimetres smaller than those on physically bigger devices such as the 5550, but it's just as bright and crisp.

Until less than a year ago, iPAQ models normally incorporated an exceptionally good software bundle on CD. Continuing the recent trend though, the 4150 comes with little more than a selection of free programs and trial versions that can just as easily be downloaded via the Internet.

At £440 the HP 4150 is only cost-effective if you need both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, but if that's the case, it delivers the goods in an admirably small and convenient package.

HP iPAQ 4150

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.hp.com*

Price: RRP £440 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★★☆

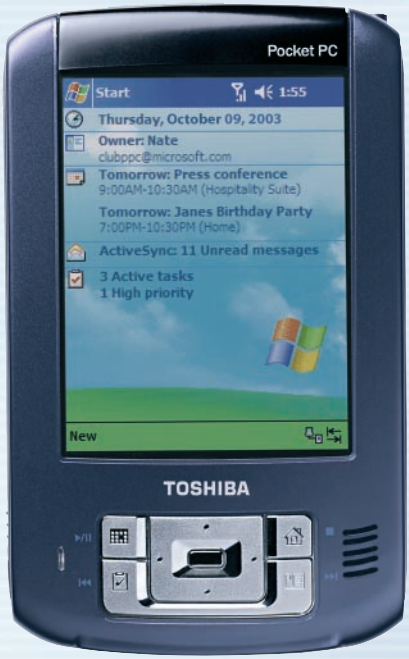
Value: ★★★½☆

Toshiba e400

We've regularly criticised Toshiba's previous Pocket PC models for their lack of style and panache. Their harsh, sharp-edged lines were both unappealing to the eye and uncomfortable in the hand.

From an outsider's viewpoint, it would appear that Toshiba has fired its entire PDA design department and found a new, far more talented group of individuals to take their place. The new e400 and e800 models are each a thing of beauty, in their smooth, silver, black and deep metallic blue livery. The only hold-over from the 'old' days is the jog dial, which on both models is as plasticky and tacky as ever.

In common with earlier Toshiba ranges, the e400 is a slimline cousin to the top-end model, in this case the e800. A basically similar design, the e400 is a fraction shorter and only 10mm (0.4") thick.



At just under half the price of the e800 you'd expect a few other differences too, and these include a standard screen (in terms of both size and resolution) simple plug-in cable in place of a full desktop sync cradle, 64MB memory rather than 128MB (but the same 31MB of flash memory), no removable battery, SD-only expansion slot and no Bluetooth or Wi-Fi option.

Aesthetics and portability aside, there's nothing extraordinary about the e400, but the combination of sleek lines and ultra-slim casing make it a delight to hold—the first Pocket PC to offer such a desirable combination of slimness, light weight (135g/4.8oz) and original styling.

It's disappointing to find not even a simple slip case included with either the e400 or e800 models. Nobody will be happy to carry even a £200 PDA without some kind of protection, and this penny-pinching omission puts purchasers to quite unnecessary trouble. Both new models come with an improved version of Toshiba's application launcher, which now shows upcoming appointments, Today screen-style, together with battery status and configurable lists of categorised applications and running programs.

If you don't need wireless connectivity, the e400 is hard to beat. The 'missing' desktop cradle can be purchased separately at a quite reasonable £35, giving a total package price that still compares well with competing models from other manufacturers.

Toshiba e400

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.toshiba.com*

Price: RRP £229 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★★☆

Value: ★★★★½

Toshiba e800

Big brother to the e400 (see previous page), the e800 is just as handsome. Its beauty isn't just skin deep though, with the top-of-the-range e800 a real powerhouse: 128MB memory, 31MB flash storage, a choice of integral Bluetooth or Wi-Fi, dual SD/CF expansion slots and an unprecedented 480x640 VGA-resolution display. Don't get too excited about the 480x640 resolution though—at least not yet. Switching the display to high-res mode (via a soft reset) invokes the e800's application launcher, complete with absurdly tiny fonts and menus—with *every* screen element at exactly half its normal size. The only built-in programs that currently support this resolution are the ClearVue Office document viewers, so the launcher makes everything else on the device invisible until 'normal' pseudo-240x320 operation is resumed—a process that requires another soft reset.

The third-party NetFront 3.1 web browser (*www.access.co.jp*) supports a similar hi-res regime, and ResFix (*home.comcast.net/~swdeveloper*) adds nominal support for all applications—complete with landscape mode—though with the same minuscule text and menus. If you can comfortably read 1mm (0.04") high text then you'll love the vast amount of information this allows you to view, but for most people it is almost worthless. When Microsoft updates the Pocket PC operating system to include its own VGA support, reputedly only a few months away, we'll hopefully see a range of options that take full advantage of high resolution screens in a much more intelligent manner. Current limitations aside, the e800 screen is still the best of any Pocket PC on the market. The huge 102mm (4") diagonal makes it almost 20% bigger than standard, and the pixel-doubled 240x320 mode shows an unsurpassed crispness.

At 195g (6.9oz) and 16mm (0.62") thick, the e800 is decidedly chunky, but part of this bulk is due to the unusually large screen. Bundled software includes a basic 'Text to Speech' application that can read out text files and emails to you, and 'Voice Command'—along the lines of Microsoft's own excellent offering (see page 30), but which in our tests (with English rather than American voices) was horribly unreliable.

Although the true benefit of the e800's VGA-resolution screen won't be realised for a little while yet, it still comes highly recommended. Relatively expensive, yes, but a desirable handheld that's a joy to use.

Toshiba e800

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.toshiba.com*

Price: RRP £469 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★★½

Value: ★★★½☆

Pocket LOOX 610

Fujitsu Siemens' original Pocket LOOX 600, reviewed back in issue 3, was a good, solid Pocket PC at a decent price. The inclusion of dual (CF and SD) expansion slots and integral Bluetooth gave it a flexibility lacking in many of its peers, and its distinctive styling was a welcome innovation amongst a sea of anonymous rectangular Pocket PC boxes.

Although the new Pocket LOOX 610 has abandoned the 600's unique design in preference to something more conventional, it scores equally high marks for good construction and high specifications.

The 610 is available in two versions: the 610BT with Bluetooth and 64MB of memory, and the 610BT/WLAN with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and 128MB. The two models are externally identical, even down to the superfluous Wi-Fi stub antenna on the Bluetooth-only version. They're unusually tall (135mm/5.25" excluding the antenna) and heavy (205g/7.2oz for the Wi-Fi version, with the Bluetooth-only model a fraction lighter at 197g/6.9oz) by modern standards, though well built, with a quality feel.

Both models have 400MHz PXA255 XScale processors, dual CF/SD expansion slots, separate up/down buttons in lieu of a jog dial, removable battery pack and a sturdy desktop docking cradle. The first instance we've seen on a PDA, the 610 models also incorporate FIR (4Mbps) infrared, as well as the usual SIR (115.2kbps) standard. In practice, the inclusion of Bluetooth rather negates the need for infrared at all, and with so few other computer peripherals supporting this standard, it's of little interest to most users.

With so much functionality built-in, the inclusion of a CompactFlash expansion slot is an irrelevance for the majority of us, though vital for a select few—particularly those with CF-equipped digital cameras or big CompactFlash disks left over from older handhelds.

The Wi-Fi/Bluetooth model is the star of the show here, with almost every conceivable top-end Pocket PC feature included. Aside from the capacious 128MB of internal RAM, there's 28MB or so of free non-volatile flash memory for additional storage, and the Wi-Fi receiver supports the emerging 54Mbps 802.11g standard as well as the older 11Mbps 802.11b.

Almost all Pocket PCs now come pre-loaded with the manufacturer's own application launcher and backup software. The Pocket LOOX 610s are no exception, and Fujitsu-Siemens' FSCSpeedMenu application launcher is especially worthy.

With most new Pocket PCs bundled with little or no bonus software on CD, it's good to see a useful selection included with the LOOX 610, most notably a copy of the excellent Pocket Informant enhanced PIM (see page 29)—although it's a rather old version (3.0). Nyditot Virtual Display adds a landscape screen mode and zoomable virtual display, and the suite of ClearVue office file viewers does a good job of displaying native Office files with complex formatting in place.

For those looking for Bluetooth, the 610BT is a well-specified device, but suffers when compared to, say, the HP iPAQ 1940, which is almost 40 percent lighter and £50 cheaper.

As a top-spec Pocket PC, the Bluetooth/Wi-Fi version of the LOOX 610 is one of the most complete and feature-rich devices on the market at present: big memory and flash disk, dual expansion slots to cover all options, both flavours of wireless connectivity, jog control, removable battery pack—it's all there. If only it were a little smaller and lighter it would be a best buy. It's still an excellent choice if you don't mind the size though, and at virtually the same price as the functionally similar HP iPAQ 4150, the fast Wi-Fi and extra memory of the 610 will tip the balance for some power users.

Pocket LOOX 610BT

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.fujitsu-siemens.com*

Price: RRP £386 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★½☆

Value: ★★★☆☆

Pocket LOOX 610BT/WLAN

From: All major handheld dealers

Contact: *www.fujitsu-siemens.com*

Price: RRP £437 inc. VAT

Quality: ★★★★½

Value: ★★★★☆

Dell Axim X3/X3i

The original Dell Axim X5 (reviewed in issue 4) was remarkable for one thing: its groundbreaking price point. That aside, it was generally bulky, ugly, and of no particular note—unless you had a need for its dual CF/SD expansion slot.

Dell has taken a fresh approach with the new X3 and X3i, creating a range of models that are still remarkably well priced, but with a sleek, handsome styling that makes them altogether far more desirable.

The X3 range comprises three variants: the X3 Standard, X3 Performance and X3i Wireless. The 'Standard' is the real budget option, with a perfectly capable 300MHz XScale processor but only 32MB of internal memory—adequate for the average consumer using their Axim for only light PDA duties, but too little for anyone planning to run a lot of third party applications. Still, at a mere £173 including VAT and delivery, this is quite a bargain.

The £59 extra of the Performance model buys you a faster 400MHz processor and a far more usable 64MB of memory. For a further £47, the X3i adds 802.11b Wi-Fi to the Performance specification, plus a little flashing blue antenna/status light and only a few grammes of extra weight.

All devices have a quantity of free flash memory for storing additional programs and files: around 3.5MB on the Standard, and 33.5MB on the Performance and X3i. The Standard model comes with a simple cable for charging and USB synchronization, but the two other models include a rather splendid desktop cradle which, apart from the blue Dell logo that illuminates when the handheld is charging, incorporates a separate slot to charge a second battery pack simultaneously.

A rarity nowadays, but very welcome nonetheless, the Axims come with a decent, 190-page printed manual, rather than the usual cop-out of a PDF file on the installation CD. Another nice addition is the super-sturdy thick padded leather slip case, supplied with all three models.

At under 140g (4.9oz) and 14mm (0.55") thick, these are just about as pocketable as Pocket PCs get, all with a good specification. The CompactFlash slot has gone, sensibly, though the removable battery pack and jog dial of the X5 remain. The jog dial has been moved to a position almost halfway down the left side of the device, which most people will find less comfortable than the conventional location near the top left corner. The usual voice recorder button has been moved too, to the front bottom left (right next to the Calendar application button), which is *definitely* less convenient for one-handed operation than the usual top-left position. Over to the far right sits a further button, assigned to Windows Media Player on the X3 models and Wi-Fi on/off on the X3i.

The big surprise (and disappointment) is that none of the three new Axims offer Bluetooth wireless. Many of us using a two-box solution of mobile phone and PDA rely heavily on Bluetooth for phone dialling and email/Internet connectivity, and short of using up the single SD expansion slot

with a (£75) Bluetooth SDIO card, there's no other option to add this feature. Bluetooth mobile phones are far less common in the USA than in Europe and elsewhere, which is almost certainly the reason why Dell has given Wi-Fi precedence as the Axim X3i's built-in wireless option.

When ordering via the Dell web site, there's an impressive range of add-on extras available at good prices. Dell is probably the first handheld manufacturer to offer spare battery packs at non-exorbitant prices, with a 950mAh pack at around £22 inc. VAT and a high capacity 1800mAh option at £36. Other notables include a folding keyboard at £50 and spare USB sync cradles at £24.

Warranty on the Axims is reassuringly generous too, with a one year next-day exchange as standard—showing that Dell appreciates how much PDA users rely on these pocketable companions. Even better, you can add coverage for next-day replacement due to accidental damage for only £21 for the first year. Options include extended warranties up to three years, either with or without the accidental damage option.

If the lack of Bluetooth isn't a show-stopper for you, there's probably a model in the X3 range that will suit you quite nicely. Well built, attractively styled and eminently pocketable, The X3 range has reinforced Dell's position as a credible player in the Pocket PC market, with prices that few of its competitors can match.

Axim X3 Standard

From: Dell Computer Corporation

Contact: *www.dell.com*

Price: £173 inc. VAT and delivery

Quality: ★★★☆☆

Value: ★★★★½

Axim X3 Performance

From: Dell Computer Corporation

Contact: *www.dell.com*

Price: £232 inc. VAT and delivery

Quality: ★★★½☆

Value: ★★★★☆

Axim X3i

From: Dell Computer Corporation

Contact: *www.dell.com*

Price: £279 inc. VAT and delivery

Quality: ★★★★☆

Value: ★★★★½

One box or two?

Is it really better to combine your mobile phone and PDA into a single, 'smartphone' device? And what about integral digital cameras and MP3 players?

With the ever-increasing number of all-in-one 'smartphone' devices now appearing, it's all too easy to assume that the whole world is migrating towards PDAs with integrated mobile phone technology, not to mention digital cameras and music playback. Is it really that simple? Is one box necessarily better than two or more, or are there trade-offs with either setup that users need to be aware of? And what if you just want a PDA with an integrated camera or MP3 music player—what are you sacrificing, if anything?

Separate or built-in phone?

Aside from issues of functionality, the perfect mobile phone is (for most people) very different to the perfect PDA. The ideal phone would be as small and as light as possible, so as to achieve maximum portability. For general use, a small screen and compact numeric keypad are quite adequate.

We all have a slightly different notion of the perfect PDA, but as a general rule it's good to have a screen that's as big as possible—in physical size rather than simply in pixels—housed in a casing that's as small and light as is practical. A big screen lets us see the maximum amount of data on screen, making the whole handheld experience that little bit more akin to using a desktop computer. Many users also like their PDAs to incorporate a built-in thumb keyboard as a preferred text entry option to pop-up on-screen keyboards and gesture recognition, another barrier to small size.

So, the perfect *combined* phone and PDA really has to compromise somewhere: either it's too big to be easily carried in a shirt pocket, or the screen size is smaller than is ideal for a decent handheld.

Work and leisure

Indispensable as handheld computers are, many of us don't feel the need to carry them with us everywhere: to the theatre, to the pub, when out with friends. For those occasions, why carry a bulky PDA or smartphone when a slim, svelte, dedicated phone will serve our needs? Also, you may feel that there's a security issue if you frequent the kind of places where pulling out an expensive (and conspicuous) PDA or smartphone might put you at risk from unsavoury characters. If you only carry a PDA around during work hours, a separate, slim, cheaper phone may be a much better proposition for you.

One-box benefits

Of course, the benefits of a single-box solution go beyond the basic PDA/phone combination, and indeed an integral phone may not be a requirement for you at all. A modern smartphone can potentially replace as many as four separate boxes, combining a full-featured PDA with a passable digital camera and MP3/video player as well.

Trade-offs

As far as telephony is concerned, most good smartphone devices are every bit as powerful as the very best dedicated mobile phones—usually more so. Most significant though, with the luxury of a big, colour screen, everything from SMS text messaging to web browsing is an altogether more pleasant experience, provided that you're prepared to carry the bigger device around.

The best dedicated mobile phones can synchronize happily with your desktop computer and store all your contact details, but a smartphone takes that integration to a new level. In most cases, any communication with a person in your smartphone-based address book is accessed in just a few seconds. Just look up a name and you'll be able to phone, email, SMS or MMS them in less time than it would take to scroll through a few menus on a basic mobile phone.

Bluetooth liberation

Don't be misled into thinking that a suitable combination of dedicated mobile phone and PDA can't do most of this though. If you're relying on infrared to communicate between the two devices it's a tedious ritual of placing them in close proximity with the infrared ports facing each other at an appropriate distance. If your phone and PDA are both equipped with Bluetooth, once partnered (a simple, on-off procedure), your PDA can invisibly 'make contact' with the phone, using it either simply to dial the phone for you, or to make the necessary Internet connection to send and receive email messages, connect to the World Wide Web or WAP sites, or to send an SMS or MMS message.

If your phone supports a fast GPRS connection, your PDA should be able to take advantage of that too, just as though the telephony were built into the PDA itself. Remember that Bluetooth doesn't need line-of-sight between the two devices as they communicate, so you can leave the phone in your bag or briefcase and still access SMS, MMS and Internet-based services from your PDA, provided that the two are within 5-10 metres of each other.

One way conversation

The trade off of two boxes rather than one? Aside from the inevitable extra bulk of two units, most current Bluetooth phones aren't able to initiate communication with a PDA. The technology should soon be commonplace, but for now your incoming SMS and MMS messages will simply stay in the phone, waiting to be read. As relatively few standalone mobile phones are MMS-enabled, this may make MMS impractical if you use a separate PDA. Some SMS and MMS programs will allow your PDA to interrogate a phone and pick up waiting messages, but this is currently a process that has to be initiated manually, rather spoiling the whole concept of an always on, always connected device.

Beyond telephony

If you're looking for a PDA that integrates a digital camera then the issue of performance trade-offs is very different. Although there are a (very) few exceptions—most notably Sony's Clie NZ90, reviewed in issue 5—the digital camera built into most PDAs is decidedly second rate. It's hard to complain with cameras now being

integrated into some sub-£200 handhelds (after all, an average camera is better than none at all), but be aware that 640x480 VGA resolution and the lack of a decent lens and flash facility can make for some disappointing snapshots. In dim lighting you may be unable to get a usable image at all, so be warned. If a digital camera is central to your PDA buying decision, be sure to try out the proposed purchase before parting with your money.

Music in motion

Most new PDAs now have a digital music playback facility as standard. Be aware that quality varies substantially though, and although your PDA-based MP3/ATRAC3/WMA/Ogg Vorbis player software may incorporate all the latest and greatest features and a graphic equaliser display, there's no guarantee that the most important feature, sound quality, will be as impressive. Playback volume may be an issue too, as the output levels of some PDAs are barely adequate, particularly when partnered with certain headsets.

Don't be immediately put off though—some PDAs have excellent playback quality, so once again you may wish to arrange a demonstration, preferably using your own headphones/earpieces (if not included with the device, as is generally the case).

A final consideration for music playback is storage capacity. Even heavily compressed music files take up a lot of space by PDA standards, and you'll need between 30 and 60MB for just an hour's worth of music. Storage cards are getting cheaper all the time, be it Memory Stick, CompactFlash, Secure Digital or MMC, but it still might be more cost-effective to buy a dedicated MP3 player. As an example, a £250 Apple iPod will store 15GB of music, 30 times more than you'll fit onto a £100 512MB SD card.

A one-box future?

There's no doubt that one-box PDA/phone/camera/MP3 devices will become more and more prevalent in the future, with the addition of high quality video playback and other multimedia wizardry thrown into the mix. Don't be bedazzled by the technology without a little thought for what you *really* want from all those separate components though. For many users, a single, do-it-all solution offers the best of all worlds at a good price, with the minimum possible bulk to get together, store and remember to keep charged. For others, two, three or even *four* separate boxes might still be the best bet.

Sony Ericsson
Web Edit
10 Things every P800 owner should know
(a.k.a. Top Tips for the Sony Ericsson P800)
Wherever you want to work...
Guidance and help
For all things
Symbian and Psion
3lib.ukonline.co.uk

PDF files to GO . . .

We look at the possibilities and practicalities of viewing Adobe Acrobat files on your handheld

It's ironic that the very attribute which makes the Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format so good for electronic documentation also makes it difficult to convert across onto your handheld. By its very nature, a PDF file tries to replace printed matter, and its creator will have made some basic assumptions about how he or she wanted the page to look. Most settle for an A4 page, or similar, ensuring that when the user hits their 'Print' button they'll get more-or-less the same thing as if the PDF creator had supplied a paper document in the first place.

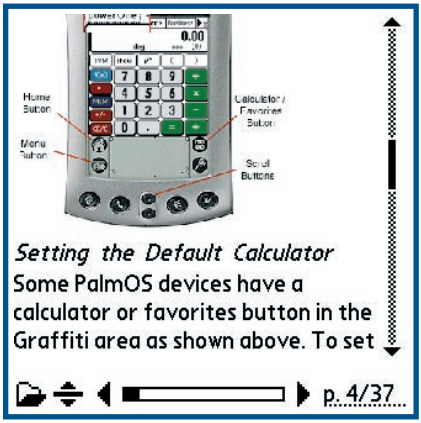
A quart into a pint pot

But how can a 21cm (8 inch) wide A4 page layout be accessed sensibly on a handheld with a screen only a quarter of that size, without needing excessive scrolling to read each line of text? And what about any embedded graphics? A 5MB PDF file is fairly common on the desktop, with plenty of computing power to store, decode and display it, but it's all rather too much drain on a handheld's resources.

Multi-platform viewer

Problems notwithstanding, there are plenty of handheld tools which claim to let you open PDFs on the move. The most successful and most multi-platform solution

RepliGo is an excellent overall solution



Adobe's Acrobat Viewer for Palm OS is generally a poor performer

is probably **RepliGo** (*www.cerience.com*), which uses a desktop-hosted convertor and Windows' own print routines to convert a PDF file into something that's specifically optimised for your handheld. RepliGo is fast and works terrifically well, with page and 'flowed' views, as long as the reliance on the desktop doesn't put you off. Palm OS users will be used to this restriction, of course, but for Pocket PC and Symbian users, note that you won't be able to view native PDFs that you receive by email.

Adobe's own

Adobe, as the creator of the PDF format, has its own **Reader** (*www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html*) for Palm OS, Pocket PC and the Nokia 9200 series communicators. This solution has the advantage of being free, although it can suffer from speed problems and, on Palm OS, of bloat, with the handheld version of each PDF file often being twice the size of the desktop original. Again, the concept of 'reflowing' is used, taking its cues from structure 'tags' in the original file, and providing proper word-wrapped text on the smaller handheld screen.

Pdf+ fills the gap for Symbian UIQ

Symbian alternatives

Symbian UIQ users, currently left out by Adobe, are also catered for by both their built-in **Viewer** software (very slow and appallingly awkward to use for PDF files) and by the third party **Pdf+** (*www.mbrainsoftware.com*), also for Psion and Series 60. The latter does a good job for most files, with its own (image-less) take on reflowing and a mountain of preferences to fiddle with, should things not look quite right.

Palm and Sony

Many Palm OS users will have received a copy of **Documents To Go** on their install CD, but this will need to be upgraded to the 'Premium' version (*www.dataviz.com*) in order to gain built-in PDF support. Unless you desperately want to bring everything 'under one roof' though, you'll

find that viewing PDF files in this way is disappointing, with images and font information lost in the translation.

Sony's **Picsel Viewer**, bundled with high-end Clie models such as the UX50 and TH55, (not available separately) is a universal viewer that generally does a good job with PDF files. Its big strength is that, unlike all the other Palm OS solutions, it reads native PDF files from a Memory Stick. Scrolling around un-tagged files is always tedious on a small PDA screen, but Picsel Viewer uses a slick drag-to-move interface rather than relying on cumbersome scrollbars. Documents are generally rendered accurately, apart from a tendency to show spaces between words at a fraction of their correct width, effectively turning whole blocks of text into a single string of characters. Like many of the PDF solutions here, Picsel Viewer becomes unusably slow and tends to throw up 'Out of memory' errors when used with multi-megabyte files of several hundred pages.

Another Palm OS-only solution is **PdfSnap** (*www.ansyr.com*), although this has been rather left behind in terms of development, with no colour support and no text search function.

Pocket PC

By the same authors as PdfSnap above, **Primer** (*www.ansyr.com*) is a Pocket PC equivalent that handles native PDF files on the handheld, but like its Palm OS cousin has not been updated for several years, making it hard to recommend.

Adobe's **Reader** (*www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html*) is a more satisfying experience on Pocket PC than it is on Palm OS, in terms of speed as well as having native PDF support, rather than having to run through a desktop convertor.

As an alternative to the Adobe reader, **ClearVue PDF** (*www.westtek.com*) is faster at rendering and scrolling around pages, though less configurable, with little beyond a simple zoom control. It tends to suffer the common problem of rendering fonts and letter spacings poorly, at least with some documents and zoom levels. In contrast, the Adobe Reader for Pocket PC does a consistently good job in this area, even though pages can sometimes take quite a while to re-draw.

Into the future

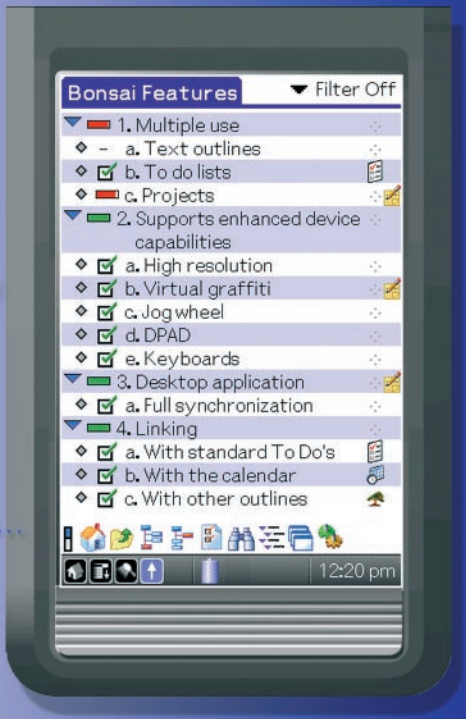
Regardless of how powerful future handhelds become, the limitation of physical screen size (regardless of resolution) will always be a barrier to effective viewing of pages created specifically for the desktop. Although thoughtful formatting and the use of PDF tags both help to make Adobe Acrobat files more usable on PDAs, this is sadly a factor that is often outside our control. With this in mind, it's important to have fairly modest expectations when it comes to viewing PDFs on any handheld device.

Adobe's Reader for Pocket PC

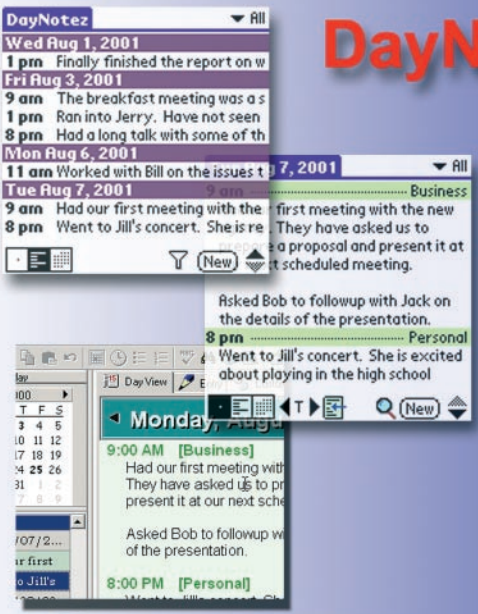
Bonsai™ 3

Keep Organized and in Sync on both your Handheld and Desktop

- Simple Outlines
- To Dos Types
- Simple Project Tasks Types
- or any combination of the above...
- Windows Desktop Application
- Customizable Exports
- Linking to Built In To Dos
- and More...



DayNotez™



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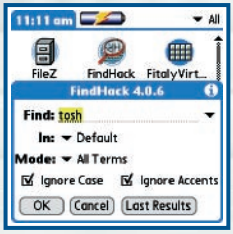
Software GEMS

We take a look at our own top 10 'must have' programs and utilities for Palm OS, Pocket PC and Symbian UIQ

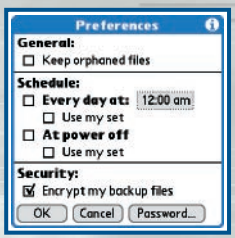
We all have our own selection of add-on software that we just can't live without. Here's our own top 10 picks for Palm OS, Pocket PC and Symbian UIQ.

Palm OS

Every operating system, whether on a handheld or desktop computer, has at least a few glaring omissions or limitations. Thankfully, third party software developers usually jump in to fill the gaps, and the Palm operating system is particularly well served, with droves of active developers across the globe.



One of the most annoying and fundamental limitations of Palm OS is its built-in Find function. The ability to search through every file in your internal memory for a specified string of characters is immensely useful, but the standard Find can't locate text strings *within* words, and doesn't allow the use of wildcards to refine your search. **FindHack** does all this, together with Boolean searches, and adds the capability to look through selected applications only, remember all your recent searches, and much more. If it's there, FindHack will track it down. If you only buy one item of add-on software for your Palm OS handheld, this should be it. $15, from *perso.wanadoo.fr/fpillet*.

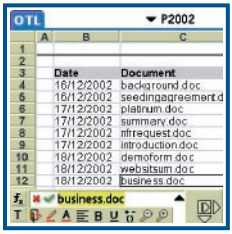


Desktop synchronization takes care of your backups when at your desk, but it makes sense to take regular backups of your data while on the move too—just in case disaster strikes. **BackupBuddyVFS** lets you keep a safe copy of the entire contents of your internal memory on a storage card, ready to be restored in only a few minutes in the event of a hard reset or damaged hardware—allowing you to restore to a replacement PDA. There's a cut-down 'Lite' version too, but the full version gives complete control, including encryption of backed-up data and the ability to restore individual files—great if you accidentally delete or modify a critical file. $17/$7, from *www.bluenomad.com.*

Opinions are divided on whether third-party application launchers are a vital accessory or just complicate the elegant simplicity of the built-in Applications screen. There are plenty of good alternatives to choose from, but **Launcher X** has a clean, multi-tabbed interface that makes it easy to organise and categorise your applications, and to transfer them between internal memory and storage card. Copying, moving and deleting are all handled with simple drag-and-drop, and there's an integral file manager application for complete control over what's stored where. $25, from *www.launcherx.com*.

A safe place to store your private passwords, credit card details and the like is essential, and **SplashID** combines a decent interface with good configurability and a reliable desktop companion for both PC and Macintosh. As with all the best password repositories, it's easy to edit and add your own custom categories. $20, from *www.splashdata.com*.

If Documents To Go was bundled with your handheld, you probably have all the spreadsheeting and word processing capability you need, but **Quickoffice Premier** is a worthy alternative, with a little more power and flexibility in both applications. In particular, the spreadsheet component permits a much better selection of font sizes, making optimum use of the small screen, whatever your eyesight. It also supports both PC and Mac synchronization. $40, with applications also available separately, from *www.mobl.com/software*.

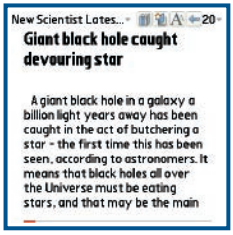


To complete the Office suite, most of us can't do without a database application, and **HanDBase** offers a good combination of simplicity and power that you're unlikely to outgrow. $30, from *www.ddhsoftware.com*. If you're looking for something flat-file, ultra quick and easy, try out **MobileDB** instead, which will have you up and running in a few minutes. $20-$30, from *www.handmark.com*.

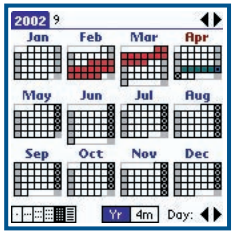
Everyone uses their handheld for keeping various lists, but **Bonsai** takes the concept to the ultimate conclusion, handling everything from multiple to dos to full hierarchical outlines and basic project planning. Items can be linked to standard Task and Calendar entries, have individual alarms attached, and generally be sorted and filtered to your heart's content. If you've ever found the basic To Do feature too limiting, an outliner such as Bonsai is well worth investigation. If you want to create and edit outlines on your desktop as well, there's a fully integrated and very polished PC desktop companion application available at extra cost. $16, or $35 with the desktop application and conduit, from *www.natara.com*.

Keeping proper track of your bank account and other financial transactions always takes a good degree of self-discipline, and a shirt-pocket handheld makes the process a lot less painful, allowing you to enter things virtually as they happen. **BankBook** is one of the best of the bunch, and incorporates a number of desirable features that so many of its competitors left out, with the exception of graphing. There's full support for repeating transactions, multiple currencies, expenditure summaries, overdraft warnings—a very long feature list that should cater for even the most demanding requirements. It's compatible with desktop Quicken and Money packages, including non-US versions. $20, from *www.bahsoftware.com*.

A product that has also made it into our top 10 must-have applications for Symbian (see page 63). There are a lot fewer ebooks available in Mobipocket format than there are for Palm Reader, but **Mobipocket Reader** scores as a one-stop solution for reading ebooks, grabbing newsfeeds and accessing reference works. Available in a free version, or $20 for the full-featured 'Pro' version, from *www.mobipocket.com*.

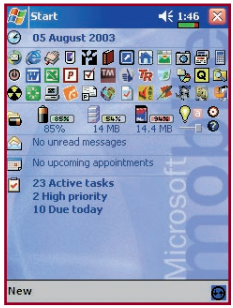


Lastly, the built-in Palm OS PIM applications are fine to begin with, but most of us eventually yearn for something that's a little more powerful, both in the way it presents our data and how we are able to manipulate it. Two products are in a dead heat for the crown here, with **DateBk5** the ultimate tool when it comes to pure features and configurability, but **Agendus** (available in various versions, see page 17) easier to get to grips with and with a cleaner, tidier interface. $25, from *www.pimlicosoftware.com*, and $25-40, from *www.iambic.com*, respectively. If your life revolves around Microsoft Outlook on the PC desktop, take a look at **KeySuite** and **Beyond Contacts** as well. Both are designed with maximum Outlook compatibility in mind, and are good alternatives to the built-in PIM suite. $60, from *www.chapura.com*, and $50, from *www.dataviz.com*, respectively.

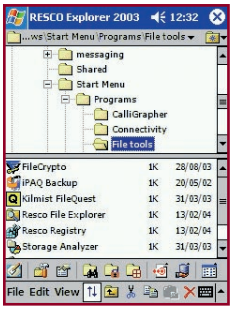


Pocket PC

There are a few basic operations within the Pocket PC operating system that are frustratingly awkward to achieve. Top of the list is probably program launching, and **Battery Pack 2004** adds easy launching of all your favourite applications straight from icons on the Today screen. That's just part of Battery Pack's ever-expanding feature list though, which includes a Today screen display of free memory, battery status and storage card information, plus backlight control, easy shutdown of running applications, auto-deletion of temporary files, and so it goes on. Almost certainly the most popular program for Pocket PC, with very good reason. Be sure to check out this must-have utility package before you try any of the others. $20, from *www.omegaone.com*.



File management is another area where the Pocket PC's built-in software is decidedly lacklustre. **Resco Explorer 2003** (see page 31) is the most powerful file manager in town, and adds everything that's missing, transforming this necessary but otherwise tedious chore into something altogether more pleasant. As well as the drag-and-drop simplicity it brings to copying and moving files, its built-in file encryption, extensive search facilities and Zip compression tools round off the package nicely. $25, from *www.resco-net.com*.



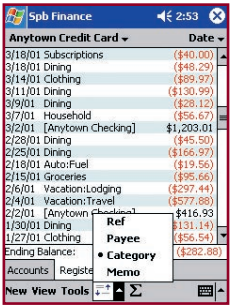
Web browsing with Pocket Internet Explorer can be surprisingly effective, particularly if you've got a fast wireless connection. To transform it from good to great, **PIEPlus** adds a full-screen mode, multiple browser windows, an optimised handheld view and lots of other useful little tweaks, including ClearType support for older Pocket PC devices. Don't go browsing without it. $15, from *www.reensoft.com*.

As that all-important secure repository for your confidential data, **eWallet** for Pocket PC (also available in a Palm OS version) has a PC desktop companion program and one of the most graphically attractive interfaces around. Keep all your PIN numbers, passwords and web site logins together, and add as many custom categories as you need. On the Pocket PC version, you can even click directly on URLs from within eWallet to launch web sites or write to private email addresses. $20 for the handheld version only, or $30 with both handheld and PC desktop versions, from *www.iliumsoft.com*.

Again from Ilium software, **ListPro** is the ultimate list manager and hierarchical outliner for Pocket PC. Also available in a Palm OS version (see page 19), it can handle everything from re-usable shopping lists to advanced task management and basic database work. Once you start using this program, you're sure to find plenty of unexpected uses for it—such is ListPro's flexibility. If it belongs in a list, ListPro is the place for it. Its optional desktop counterpart has all the features of the handheld application, with full synchronization between the two. $20, or $30 with the desktop application, from *www.iliumsoft.com*.

With basic Word and Excel functionality already built into Pocket PCs, a good database application is the only glaring omission from the standard Office suite. Our recommendations here

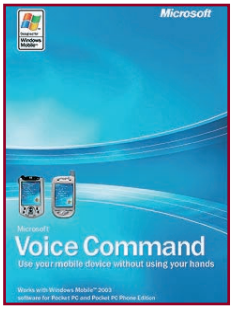
are identical to those for Palm OS, with **HanDBase** our weapon of choice when it comes to power and expandability, complete with relational capabilities, and **MobileDB** as a simpler, flat-file alternative. $30, from *www.ddhsoftware.com*, and $30, from *www.handmark.com*, respectively. If you're looking for an adjunct to Microsoft Access on the PC desktop rather than a standalone application to create free-form databases directly on your handheld, take a look at **Data On The Run**. $13, from *www.biomobility.com*.



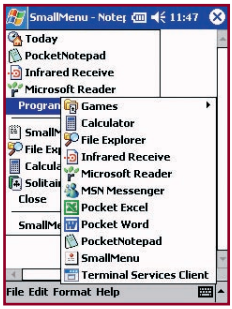
There's a good selection of Pocket PC applications to help manage your finances while on the move, and our current favourite is **SpbFinance**. The program is exceptionally intuitive to use, with a slick interface and full international currency support. The latest version (1.5) incorporates the few important features that were missing from the original, including repeating transactions. Making excellent use of the nice big Pocket PC screen, there's a good graphical reporting module and the ability to show rolling account balances in your Today screen. There's also a separate new version specifically for users of Quicken on the PC. $20, from *www.spbsoftwarehouse.com*.

Despite excellent compatibility with Microsoft Outlook on the desktop, the built-in Pocket PC PIM suite leaves a lot of people wanting more. As with Palm OS, there are two mainstream contenders when it comes to turbocharging your Calendar, Tasks and Contacts. **Pocket Informant** (see page 29) is the Pocket PC equivalent to DateBk5 on Palm OS, with endless configurability, multiple calendar views, hierarchical task lists and just about every other option you can think of. If you feel bogged down with so many options and features, **Agenda Fusion** is rather more digestible—ultimately a little less powerful, but with a shorter learning curve and still a huge step forward from the built-in solutions. $25, from *www.pocketinformant.com*, and $30, from *www.developerone.com*, respectively.

A bit of a luxury, yes, but certainly not frivolous. **Microsoft Voice Command** (for Windows Mobile 2003 only, see page 30) doesn't do very much, but what it does do, it does very well. Just being able to speak the words "Show John Smith" and have the person's contact details *immediately* appear in your Contacts application is a genuine time-saver, as well as being something to impress friends. $40, from *www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile*.

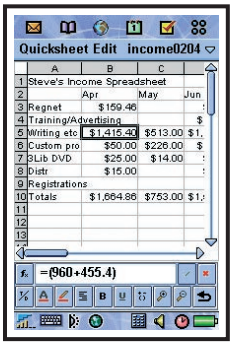


Finally, if you're a fan of the Windows Start Menu for launching programs, **SmallMenuPlus** brings a similar arrangement to your Pocket PC, so you can start up (and close) applications via a set of configurable nested menus. $6, from *www.tillanosoft.com*.



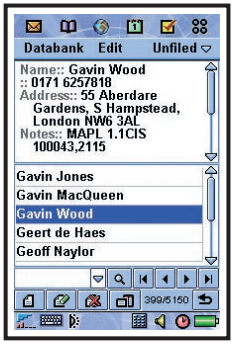
Symbian UIQ

First on the shopping list of any Sony Ericsson P800 or P900 owner should be the free **SMan**, the Swiss army knife of the UIQ world. The core function is managing the applications (tasks) running on your handheld, but it also does a great job of file management, memory compression, fixing a couple of UIQ bugs, and much more. Free, from *renegade.w3xs.com/droll.htm*.



One of the great mysteries of the Symbian world was that Psion's excellent Word and Sheet applications didn't get carried through into UIQ, but at least the third party **Quickoffice** has made it possible to still get some real work done. Quicksheet is great with numbers but rather plain to look at, and the narrow UIQ screen doesn't help. Likewise, Quickword is limited to basic text formatting. More development is needed, but Quickoffice is still a must-have for anyone contemplating UIQ in their mobile office. $40, from *www.mobl.com/software*.

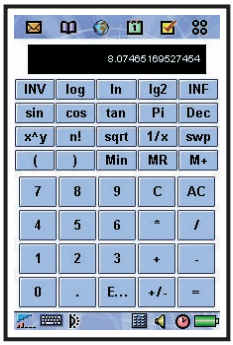
The other great office staple is, of course, the database, with Psion's free-form Data being another casualty of the move towards smartphones. Luckily, **Handy Databank** has emerged with almost identical functionality, making it exceptionally easy for beginners to learn. It's unashamedly a flat file database, benefiting from a simple interface and a fair turn of speed. It also comes with a very capable PC-hosted file convertor. $25, from *www.epocware.com*.



From the same stable comes **Handy Safe**, running on both UIQ and under Windows, keeping your PINs, password and confidential information instantly accessible and yet safe from snoopers. It's hugely configurable, with as many categories and item types/templates as you care to set up. And best of all, a click of the 'Sync' button sees all changes synchronized between the desktop and handheld. Handy Safe also works on Series 60 devices and the Nokia 9210. $25, from *www.epocware.com*.

On the finance side, there are no native Symbian OS money managers, but the functionality is all there in **Jabp**. Look past the plain text and occasionally quirky interface and you'll find accounts,

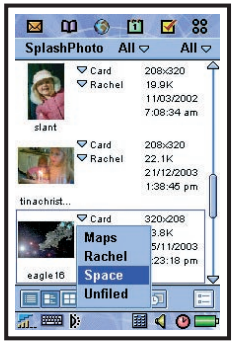
categories, standing orders, investments, multiple currencies and even graphical reports. Running courtesy of Personal Java, Jabp works just as well on the Nokia 9210 and on old Psion palmtops. Free, from *www.freepoc.org*.



Also Java-hosted is **Scientific Calculator**, a very accessible tool with no unnecessary frills to get in the way. Apart from the usual scientific functions, Scientific Calculator (also known as SciCalc) includes base conversion (e.g. Hex/Octal/Binary), factorials and support for inline parentheses. Free, from *www.my-symbian.com*.

UIQ users can cover a lot of bases with the **Mobipocket Reader**, the all-purpose document and news reader that's also available for just about every other handheld platform. Local web pages or Word documents can be published to your UIQ device, standard DOC ebooks read with ease, and AvantGo-style daily news sources gathered from your desktop's Internet connection and compressed for handheld use. Available in a free version, or $20 for the full-featured 'Pro' version, from *www.mobipocket.com*.

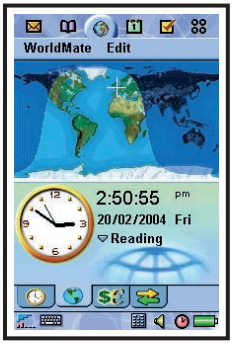
SplashPhoto is as powerful on UIQ as it is on other platforms, with several different thumbnail views, the most useful including pick lists for card and folder management, plus a speed of viewing which knocks spots off the built-in Pictures application. Crucially, it can also handle huge images, such as scanned-in maps, letting you pan around at full resolution. Also available for Palm OS, Pocket PC and Symbian Series 60. $20, from *www.splashdata.com*.



Although the built-in Audio player does a good job of playing MP3-encoded music files, the Memory Stick Duo limit of 128MB hampers how much music you can take with you. The open source Ogg Vorbis music format is roughly twice as efficient, giving an impressive maximum of around four or five hours of music per card. To play them, you'll need **OggPlay**, which works in both flip-closed and flip-open modes, and which lets you select playlists according to artist, album, genre, etc. OggPlay is also available for Series 60 devices. Free, from *www.geocities.com/p800tools*.

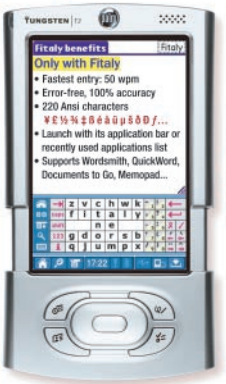
Perhaps more of a luxury than the other items here, but **WorldMate** (see page 31), also for Palm OS and Pocket PC, does its best to be useful as well. At its core are a couple of desk clocks, one showing the time in four other cities of your choice and the other displaying a very attractive solar map. A large database of cities means that you can use WorldMate to look up places and their locations on the map. Currency

(with built-in Internet update facility), interactive packing checklists and unit convertors round off a very useful and visually impressive set of utilities. $30, from *www.mobimate.com*.



50 Words Per Minute On Your Palm!

FitalyVirtual T3 – Fastest Text Entry



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SOLEBON (Palm OS)

Previously known as Smallware Solitaire, this major update brings together a collection of 50 of the most popular patience (solitaire) card games, including both single and double pack favourites such as Klondike, Demon, Sir Tommy and Miss Milligan. Aside from the beautifully clear hi-res graphics, every possible configuration option is supported, from alternative card backs to scoring and an on-screen timer. Solebon incorporates full rules for all 50 titles, and there's a cheat mode in case you get really frustrated. $25, from *www.solebon.com*.

SOLITAIRE MANIA PRO (Palm OS)

Even more ambitious than Solebon (above) when it comes to quantity, Solitaire Mania Pro offers a staggering 225 titles in a single package. Although the interface doesn't quite match the crisp clarity and elegance of Solebon, the finely-crafted graphics are impressive, and a great feature is that you can choose which of the 225 games to play based on skill level, odds of winning, average completion time, etc. Card sizes are scaled to suit the current game in progress, and it's possible to transfer games to a favourites list, or hide those that you don't want to include. You can view game rules, statistics on your performance, change card and background colours, and get hints as needed. $20, from *www.pdart.com*, or $10 for a basic version containing 12 games.

LEGACY (Palm OS)

A brand new title that supports most resolutions in the ever-expanding range of Palm OS devices, this fantasy rôle playing game has plenty of atmosphere and some truly gorgeous hi-res artwork. As you explore the virtual world of swords and sorcery, you pick up weapons, armour and magical items, build up your team of fighters, clerics and magicians, and take on the variety of quests presented to you by characters along the way. The game interface is a joy to use once you've got the hang of it, and there's plenty of opportunity for strategic play as you swap resources between characters. You'll need to take good care of your band in the early stages to avoid being killed off by the usual assortment of foes and beasties, but if you save frequently to avoid frustration then this is an immensely absorbing game—best played in a dimly-lit room for maximum effect. Both Pocket PC and Symbian UIQ versions are in the pipeline. $20, from *www.redshift.hu*.

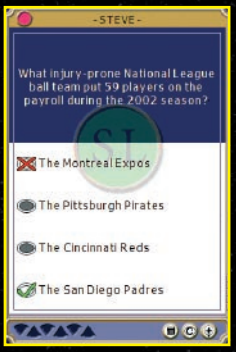
DREAMWAY (Palm OS)

Remarkably similar to Gangsta Race for Pocket PC, this new Palm OS 'top down' car racing game looks just as good, though there's no audio soundtrack—just car sound effects. Delightful scrolling cartoon graphics make this one of the most visually impressive Palm OS games to date. It's an extremely demanding application by Palm OS standards, requiring as much as 8MB for installation and up to 5MB of free memory in order to run. The animation is super-smooth though, and car control by dragging the stylus works exceptionally well. The fine detail and rather small size of the cars make it a little hard on the eyes at times, but gameplay is tense and frenetic, with the option to add in-car weaponry, oil slicks, and so on, to spice up the action. You get the choice of six tracks, five difficulty levels, seven individual car types, tournament mode and more. There's also full-screen support for the Sony Clie range, including the UX50, plus Palm Tungsten T3 and others. $20, from *www.handyent.com*.

BUBBLE GOLDEN PACK 2 (Palm OS)

A hi-res update to one of the most addictive game collections around, this new release incorporates 10 variations covering three games: Shooter, Thriller and Flytrix. 'Shoot' a coloured bubble from the bottom of the screen to eradicate blocks of the same colour, clear the screenful of bubbles by tapping on matching blocks, or guide the falling blocks into position, Tetris-style, to clear the rows and win the game. They're all fun, they're all frighteningly hard to put down, and the smooth, colourful animations all add to the experience. $27, from *pocketroom.com*, with variants also available for both Pocket PC and Windows PCs.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT (Palm OS/Pocket PC)



The latest in the string of popular parlour games being ported to handhelds by Handmark, this is a faithful clone of everyone's favourite general knowledge quiz-cum-board game. Aside from the obvious, there's animated die rolling, a zoomable board, and optional trivial facts that pop up from time to time to add background information to the questions—so interesting and entertaining that it's a pity they only appear for a small percentage of the questions. As well as a full-blown game with up to six players, there's 'Flash' mode, a quick game where you aim to be the first player or team to get a set number of questions right. You can even join in a game with other Trivial Pursuit owners via infrared, Bluetooth or an Internet connection. The only downside is that the (understandable) American bias of the questions makes life tough for those of us who don't know the Pittsburgh Pirates from the San Diego Padres, so we really need to see some alternative question packs for non-US audiences. Otherwise, this is just the thing for parties, long journeys or maybe even the local bar. $30, from *www.handmark.com*.

SHATTERED WORLDS: SPACE COMBAT (Palm OS/Pocket PC)

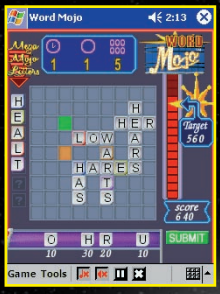
As with Darxide EMP (reviewed in the last issue), this is a bang up-to-date 3D take on the classic Asteroids space battle game. Silky-smooth graphics, lots of different opponents and weapons, 15 missions, plus a frantic soundtrack that adds nicely to the sense of urgency as you try to shoot everything else out of the sky before it attacks you (in the case of enemy ships), or collides with you (in the case of asteroids). It's just as well that there are three difficulty levels to choose from, as the gameplay is tricky to get to grips with at first. You can use any combination of hardware buttons and stylus drags for control. $18, from *www.astraware.com*.

INTERSTELLAR FLAMES (all platforms)

Already available for Pocket PC, the new Palm OS, Symbian UIQ and Series 60 versions feature identical gameplay. It doesn't match the smoothness or resolution of the graphics in Shattered Worlds (above), but as a pure fun shoot-em-up it still scores high marks. Weapons firing is completely automatic—all you have to do is steer your spaceship with the stylus. Take out all the enemy fighters, shield generators, dreadnoughts, deck guns and radar dishes to progress through the levels. Sheer laser blasting action that's dead easy to learn and entertaining to play. $9, from *www.xengames.com*.

SEA STRIKE (Palm OS/Pocket PC)

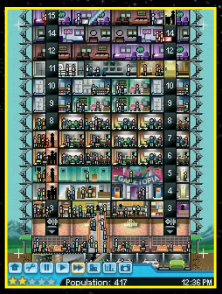
A rather simple game that's been turned into a visual feast by the use of subtly shaded graphics that look like something straight out of Disney's Finding Nemo. Maneouvre your submarine to avoid the depth charges, mines and bombs, and sink all the enemy vessels and planes. The number and variety of enemies increases as you progress through the 10 levels, and you'll need to replenish your depleting air supply by catching fish (?) as you go. It's a pity there's no option to pause a game in progress, and the replay value may be a little limited, but a nice little game that will appeal particularly to youngsters. $15, from *www.islandlabs.com*.



WORD MOJO (Palm OS/Pocket PC)

It may *look* like rather like Scrabble, but this novel word game is something altogether different. Build up as many words as you can, as quickly as you can, from the row of tiles at the bottom of the screen. It's a race to reach your target score for each round as the timer counts down and the score display down the edge of the screen climbs skywards. As you place the letters, crossword style, you can qualify for the 'Mega Mojo' bonus round by placing letters on the specially coloured squares so that they form their own words. There's an untimed mode if the action all gets too much, but the game is really more fun when racing against the clock. Essential for all word game aficionados. $15, from *www.astraware.com*.

TOWER MOGUL (Pocket PC)



Effectively a variant of the desktop Sim Tower for your Pocket PC, Tower Mogul has you building a high-rise tower block, quite literally from the ground up. You'll need to get the right balance of hotel rooms, condominiums, offices, and so on if you're to keep your population (known as 'Verts') happy and achieve the elusive five star rating for your tower. There's a brief interactive tutorial to help get you started, but you'll still need a fair amount of practice and some false starts before you get into the swing of things. As the population increases, you'll see the little 'people' dashing around as the sky alternates from night to day and your tower grows. As with most 'reality' simulations, Tower Mogul can get pretty hard to put down once you start to get a virtual community going—assuming that you've got the patience to spend several hours with the game. Everything has been lovingly crafted, with superb graphics, and the artwork is of the very highest standard throughout. Not for those with a short attention span, but an absolute must for all strategy and simulation fans. $12, from *www.esoftinteractive.com*.

TOMMY KOMBAT (Pocket PC)

A good old fashioned platform game with plenty of polish, Tommy Kombat boasts dazzling graphics and a catchy foot-tapping soundtrack. There's a puzzle element to the game too, as your valiant commando has to switch the direction of conveyor belts, turn machinery on and off, put out fires, and so on while trying to eliminate the rebels and save the civilian hostages. Watching the colourful animation unfolding before you is almost as much fun as playing the game, which with 64 levels is sure to keep you amused for many hours. The instructions in our review copy were confusing when explaining which hardware buttons perform which function, and there are apparently some compatability issues with certain Pocket PC devices, but these issues are all due to be fixed by the time you read this. $20, from *www.cascatagames.com*.

ANTHELION (Pocket PC)

Yes, it's yet *another* space shoot-em-up, but worthy of mention for being yet another really good one. Run your pirate ship through the asteroid fields and pick up the floating booty capsules, destroying asteroids and enemy ships as you go. The whole thing has a definite 'Star Wars' flavour, right down to the military march-style music and animated hyperspace jumps. There's plenty of attention to detail in the programming, from the moving starfields, background planets and nebulae to the finely detailed mission setup screens. Gameplay feels similar to a jet fighter simulation, with its heads-up display, target lock-on and multiple weapon selection. It's all immensely absorbing, and overall one of the very best of the genre. $20, from *www.pdamill.com*.

V-RALLY (Symbian UIQ)

There can't be many computer platforms that haven't seen a version of V-Rally over the years, and now it's UIQ's turn. If you've seen and been disappointed by the lacklustre versions for the Psion and Nokia 9210 then look again, for this is a totally different beast. From spinning 3D viewpoints to fast drives through continental mountain villages, the graphic detail and speed of V-Rally is enormously impressive. No wonder Sony Ericsson chose it for its flagship demo to show what the P900 is capable of. Graphics apart, the game is fun but pitched firmly at the serious gamer. Like other serious driving simulations, V-Rally takes a lot of practice before you can avoid ending up in a crumpled heap by the side of the road. $30, from *www.handango.com*.

EDOOM (Symbian UIQ)

The 3D shoot-em-up classic Doom is another game that has made its way onto most computers, although this time it's free. EDoom uses the standard '.WAD' game files that you can download from a zillion places on the Internet, interpreting them and pushing pixels around very, very fast on the P800 and P900. The usual texture-mapped walls and three dimensional gameplay is all here,

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GAMES!

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"Very addictive - Extinction is a classic !"
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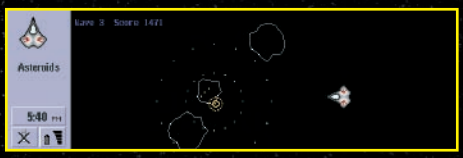
pocketpc.ch

Available to TRY and BUY for $9.95 from Clickgamer.com

as are the original digital sound effects. In other curious parallels with V-Rally, EDoom works only in 'wide-screen' mode and is also set up with very, very sensitive stylus control. Load both of these games on your P800 and you can say goodbye to well over 10MB of expansion card and a week or so of productive work! Freeware, from *mobile.yipton.net*.

TTI FOOTBALL (Symbian UIQ)

The screenshot and your own experiences of playing FIFA 2002 (or similar) on your family's PlayStation should tell you most of what you need to know about TTI Football. You'll need to be quite skillful to win against your P800 or P900, which is good, as it means lots of playability. All player control is with the stylus. Frustratingly, TTI Football quits completely when you pop another application into the foreground, presumably on grounds of conserving memory, but in our opinion a bad design decision. The trial version is limited to a paltry minute or so, complete with intrusive advert messages, but if you like football games then you'll probably decide to buy in the first few seconds. $15, from *www.my-symbian.com*.



ASTEROIDS (Nokia 9210)

Intriguingly, this rather splendid little arcade game was developed as an example program by a programmer at Symbian. It's the original Asteroids as we know and love it, with the addition of multi-fire power-ups and point bonuses that you have to dock with. Control of the spacecraft is intuitive, using only five keys (including the left and right arrow keys for rotation and the space bar to fire) and it's all tremendous fun. Importantly, for those of us who like our games to be just five minute diversions from getting on with something more productive, Asteroids doesn't take long to play, in part because you only get one 'life'. Freeware, from *www.symbian.com/developer/techlib/apps/asteroids.html*.

PSICARDS (Nokia 9210)

A recent port of the popular version for Psion palmtops, PsiCards is a compendium of nine common card solitaires: Spider, Montana, Classic Solitaire, FreeCell, Pyramid, Armistice, TriPeaks, TwentyOne and Indian. It's fair value, with basic but colourful animations, customisable card backs and backgrounds. Mind you, playing card solitaires on the Nokia 9210 is more tiring than on other platforms, with no stylus to help out. The card fonts used are tiny, too, so be prepared to squint a little. There's a good help file in Word format, with the rules of all the variants explained and a good selection of tips. £15, from *www.pocketiq.com*.

Your portable sketchpad

From simple doodlings to more complex drawings and schematics, your handheld may well be up to the task . . .

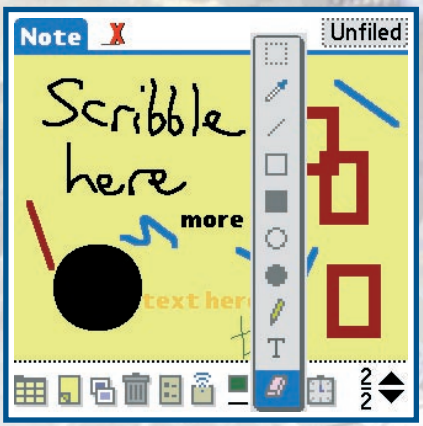
Of the many tasks your handheld computer can be turned to, most modern PDAs include a simple sketching application that can be used to jot down a quick map, a few scribbled notes or a very simple diagram.

If your particular handheld has no touch screen, such as the Nokia 9200 and Series 60 models, drawing *anything* on screen tends to be a painful process. Conversely, if you're running a stylus-driven Palm OS, Pocket PC or Symbian UIQ device, sketching on screen is almost as straightforward as drawing on paper. If you have a decent sketching application, the biggest limitation tends to be the physical size of your screen, and although some sketch programs allow you to scroll around a large virtual drawing area, this is often all-but unworkable in practice.

Simple sketches

If you don't want to invest in a third party program, recent Palm OS models come with **Note Pad**, a basic single colour scratchpad that lets you scribble an unlimited number of notes into scrollable virtual pages, with three alternative 'pen' thicknesses and a simple eraser tool. Basic as it is, Note Pad allows you to attach an alarm to any note, and synchronizes with both PC and Macintosh desktops. For taking ultra-quick notes, perhaps while on the phone, some users find this preferable to wrestling with Graffiti or an on-screen keyboard.

If this concept works well for you, **BugMe!** (*www.electricpocket.com*), also available for Pocket PC and Symbian UIQ, with a cut-down version for stylus-less Symbian Series 60 devices, extends the basic Post-It™ note idea with a variety of pen widths and colours. There's also a text entry option and basic drawing tools for geometric shapes. It has a flexible alarm capability, and notes can be time-stamped, locked to



BugMe! is great for quick notes, and is available for virtually all platforms

prevent inadvertent editing, and turned into templates for re-use at a later date. Multiple notes are managed via thumbnail views that allow you to annotate, delete and rename to your heart's content.

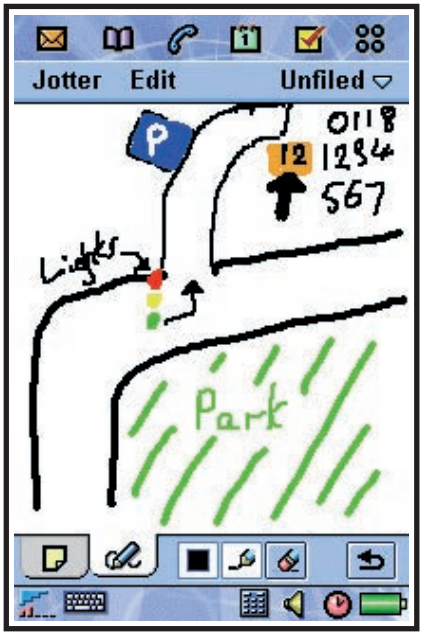
Also for Palm OS, though not yet updated for hi-res, **Sketcher Plus** (*www.palmettologic.com*) is broadly similar to BugMe!, with a better set of drawing tools and good alarm support. If you're happy with monochrome-only, **DiddleBug** (*diddlebug.sourceforge.net*) offers much of the functionality of BugMe! in a freeware package. To add scribbles to your Palm Memo and To Do entries, try **Memo PLUS** and **ToDo PLUS** (*www.handshigh.com*).

If you're a Pocket PC user, the built-in **Notes** supports scribbled notes as well as text and voice memos, and you can even mix all three together. There are very few other features though, apart from the (useful) option to zoom the size of your scribbled jottings. **Sketch It!** (*www.handango.com*) is an alternative if you want to do simple freehand sketches and need nothing more than the option to use colour.

For something more capable, **BugMe!** (see previous page) is a good option, as is **PhatPad** (see page 24 of issue 5, *www.phatware.com*). Although PhatPad lacks an alarm feature or any drawing tools beyond multiple pen thicknesses and colours, its 'digital 'ink' technology does a beautiful job of smoothing out your stylus strokes, giving a feel that's genuinely more like pen on paper. Sketches can be converted into JPEG or BMP format for export or transmission via email if desired, and the product integrates smoothly with the company's CalliGrapher handwriting recognition package.

Other than Bug Me! (above), there's slightly less choice for UIQ users, partly because the Sony Ericsson P800 and P900 already include the fairly capable **Jotter**. Each 'page' can include 16-colour doodlings in four different pen thicknesses, with related paragraphs of text only a tab away in the same entry. Usefully, you can use 'Send as' to instantly send your sketches to someone else by infrared, Bluetooth, MMS or email.

HandPainter Pro has a solid set of drawing and painting tools



UIQ's Jotter is perfect for simple notes

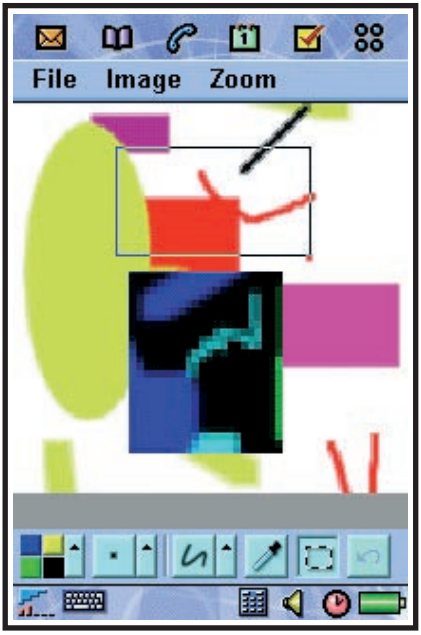
Fancy sketching

If you're something of an artist or simply want a more comprehensive set of drawing and painting tools, you'll probably want something more. For Palm OS users, the ever-popular **TealPaint** (*www.tealpoint.com*) has recently had a major makeover, with the new version 6 sporting an impressive array of tools, including line and shape drawing, a paint bucket for filling selected areas with a chosen colour, a variety of decorative fill patterns and a slew of brush widths and styles. As well as zooming images up and down, it's even possible to use multiple layers for different elements of your creation, which can be handy for complex projects.

If you're looking for a 'fun' painting package to exercise your creative flair, TealPaint measures up nicely, with the addition of a neat animation feature that will stitch multiple images together into a slideshow. TealPaint can feel quite sluggish in operation, especially when loading or saving, but in terms of pure features this is probably the most powerful drawing package for Palm OS. It's also one of the very few drawing/painting applications that supports full screen 320x480 mode in OS5 models, such as the Palm Tungsten T3.

Slightly less ambitious than TealPaint but a lot snappier to use, **HandPainter Pro** (*www.softaway.com*) for Palm OS doesn't offer layers, animations or pattern fills, but like TealPaint it's firmly in the realm of creative painting software rather than being limited to simple sketches. **HandPainter**, from the same web site, is a cut-down freeware alternative.

For Pocket PC, there are some very powerful drawing and painting packages to choose from. **Pocket Painter** (*www.aidem.com.tw*) and **iPaint** (*www.cobaltinteractive.com*)



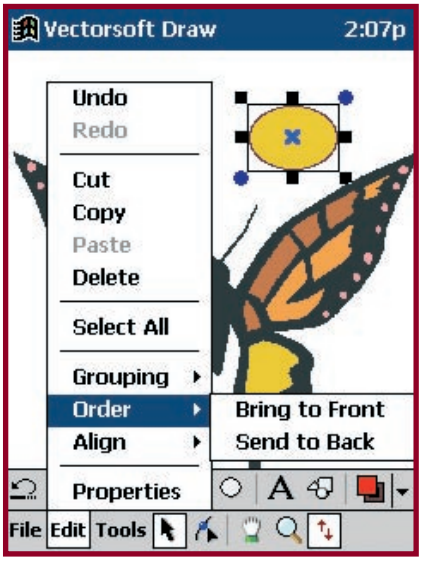
Personal Paint running on a P800

Pocket PAinter has a solid set of drawing and painting tools

both have most of the basic tools you'd find in a desktop drawing/painting program, and a number of more advanced ones that will be familiar to users of Adobe Photoshop and PaintShop Pro. Pocket Painter is the more powerful of the two, with a mass of pencil and pen types, plus a variety of special effect filters designed primarily for use on imported photographic images.

For UIQ devices, **Personal Paint** (*www.handango.com*) offers quite a bit more than Jotter, with a full 16-bit colour palette, proper painting tools (though not text, curiously), zooming and advanced effects, such as blur, sharpen, and so on.

If it's photographs you want to manipulate, **Pocket Artist** (*www.conduits.com*) for Pocket PC is the ultimate handheld solution, with the new **Sbp Imageer** (see page 29) a good choice for basic image corrections. For UIQ, **PhotoPlus** (*www.nicevalley.ch*), does a similar job, with typical photo effects and corrections.

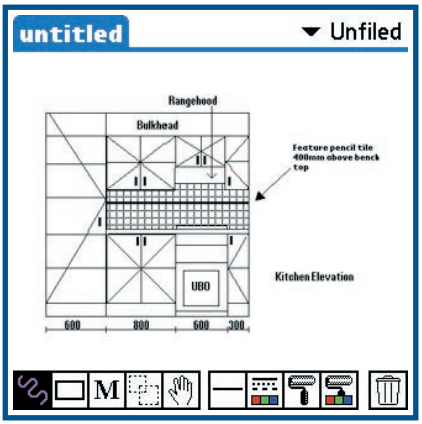


Vectorsoft Draw boasts a truly impressive array of vector drawing tools for Pocket PC

Vector drawing

If you want to create a lot of geometric shapes, perhaps in the form of basic engineering drawings, flow diagrams and schematics, the vector-based **Leonardo** (*www.leonardo.wirejunkie.com*) is hard to beat if you're a Palm OS user. As it uses vector images rather than bitmaps, its images are fully zoomable without loss of resolution. It comes with a free desktop companion program that works with both Windows PCs and Mac OS. Leonardo is not quite Adobe Illustrator for your handheld, but **Vectorsoft Draw** (*www.vectorsoft.gr/draw*) for Pocket PC comes impressively close, with such high-end desktop features as Bézier curves, and objects that remain individually editable at any stage in the drawing process. An excellent 'Library' feature lets you save objects for re-use—perfect for flow charts and schematics.

If you thought full-blown engineering drawings were impossible for a PDA to handle, take a look at **PocketCAD PRO** (*www.pocketcad.com*) for Pocket PC. At $200 it's a serious engineer's tool, and can view and edit industry standard AutoCAD files, amongst others.



Leonardo is excellent for creating diagrams and schematics

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Getting to grips with HanDBase 3

The sixth part of our beginners guide to using this powerful database application for Palm OS and Pocket PC

Over the past five issues we've set up a simple database file using basic field types, populated it with some sample data and then used the HanDBase Forms Designer to present everything in a more attractive and easy to read fashion.

In this instalment, we'll look at how you might use some of the field types we haven't yet covered. We've already used 'Text', 'Integer' (whole number) and 'Pop-Up' field types, and talked about 'Float' (decimal numbers) a little along the way. We'll continue with the 14 remaining field types, in sequence.

Tick boxes galore

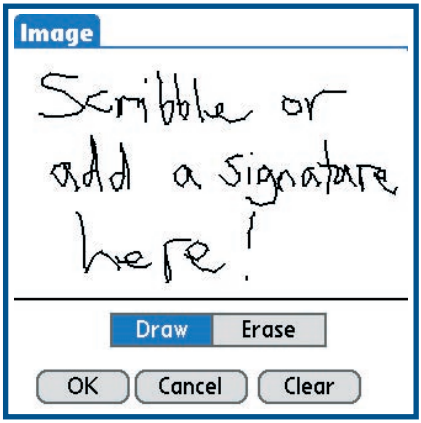
'Check-Box' is a very simple but useful field type. Whenever you want to create a field that has two states: on/off, yes/no, and so on, Check-box is the answer. Once set up, the field will present a little square box which, when tapped, will display a little tick mark. You can use this to display any field type that has two possible options: if it won't otherwise be clear which of the two corresponds to the 'ticked' state, just add a short note in the field name, such as "Lever position (tick for down)".

Something unique

A less obvious field type, 'Unique' is used to give each record in your database a unique identification number. When you add a 'Unique' field to your database, the first record will automatically be assigned as number '1', the second record added will be '2', and so on. If you add this field to a database that's already been populated with records, it will sequentially number all the existing records, then apply the next available number to the next record you add.

Although there's no flexibility in the way the numbering system works, with a little workaround you can start your sequence wherever you like, and even increment your numbers in steps greater or smaller than one. To do this, just create an additional 'Calculated' field, and set this to take the 'Unique' field value and apply it to a suitable calculation. For example, if you want your unique numbers to start from 1000, set the calculated field to be the 'Unique' field + 999. If you want to go from, say, 10 upwards in steps of 5, set the calculated field to be ('Unique'*5)+5.

If you use a calculated field to show your new, modified unique ID number, you'll probably want to hide the 'Unique' field from view, as it's only used in the underlying calculation. Just go into the 'Edit



Add basic sketches with the 'Image' field

Fields' screen, tap on the 'Unique' field, and un-check the 'Visible' check box, which will mask it from both list and record views.

We'll look at calculated fields in more detail in the next instalment.

Database scribbles

The next field type, 'Image', is rather basic in the current version of HanDBase, though can still be useful. Once you add one or more 'Image' fields to your database, a quick tap on the tiny page icon that appears next to the field heading in your list view will invoke a *basic* sketching facility: the 'page' size is limited to a fixed portion of the screen, there's no colour option, and only a single pen width. If you make a mess of the drawing for one of your records you can switch to an Erase tool to rub out portions, or alternatively just tap the 'Clear' button and start again.

The facility is particularly useful for adding signatures to transaction records, but there are plenty of other uses. Note that although the contents of 'Image' fields appear (and can be created or edited) in the PC-based HanDBase Desktop, there's no easy way to export them to other applications, or to import them into HanDBase from elsewhere.

Making a date

The next field type, 'Date', is rather more powerful. As you'll see if you go into the appropriate 'Edit Field' dialog, there are four options when setting up a date field. If you choose the first option in the 'Behaviour' pop-up, 'Ask User for Date', you'll need to tap on the 'No Date' default that appears in each record in order to set an appropriate value. Rather than having to type in a date manually (with the resulting possibility for errors), you'll be presented with the usual Palm OS or Pocket PC date picker, from where you can navigate and tap on the desired day. Alternatively, tap on the date field's heading to be presented with a list of quick-entry options for today, tomorrow, and so on.

The second option, 'Date Record Added', will automatically enter the date on which you add each new record. Note that this value can be altered at a later stage if desired. Also, note that if you add this field to a pre-existing database, all previously-added records will have the field pre-set to 'No Date', which again can be changed manually.

'Date Record Modified', the third option, will automatically update itself whenever you make a change to any of a record's fields. This is immensely useful for keeping track of changes to each database entry.

Much less useful, the 'Current Date' option will show the current date whenever a record is opened. Most useful purely to have an on-screen display of today's date.

In the next issue we'll look at all the remaining field types, before moving on to some of HanDBase's more powerful features.

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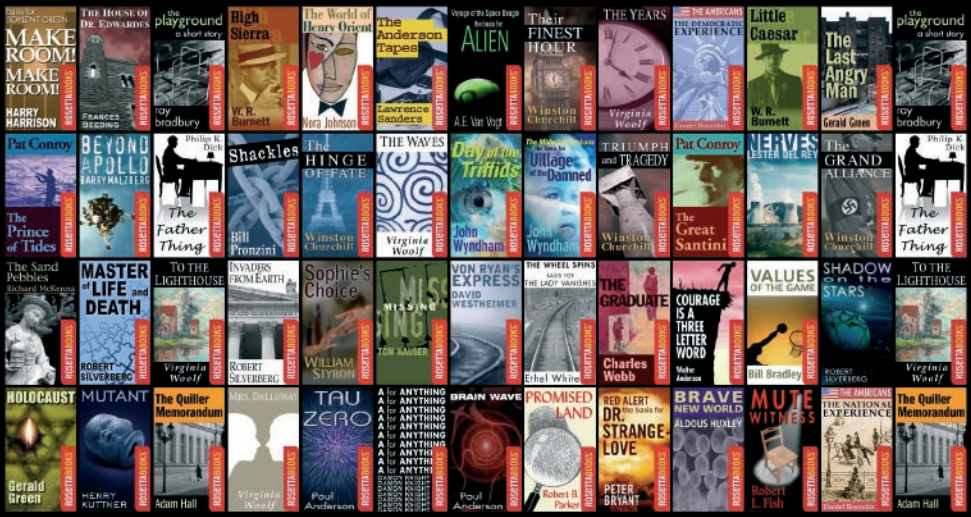

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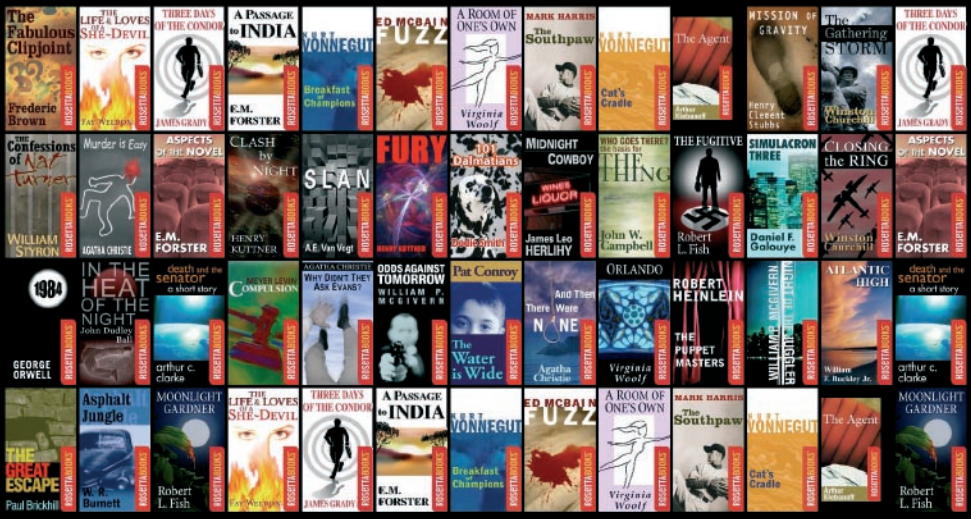

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Worth a Read

Our regular look at the ever-expanding world of ebooks and ebook-related software for your handheld

Reading novels and short stories with your ebook software isn't the only thing it's good for. There's now a good selection of reference works available in ebook format, together with some pretty impressive dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopaedia products.

Lightning lookups

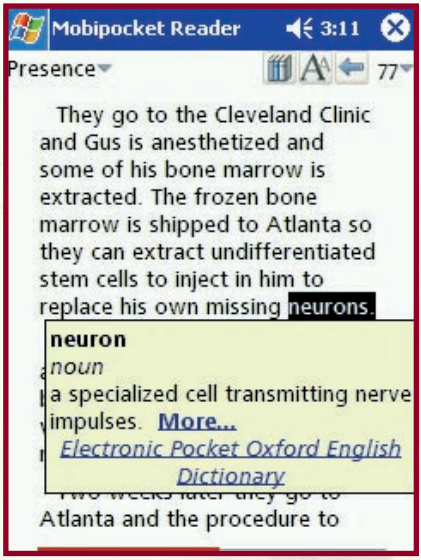
Keen as you may be to expand and enrich your vocabulary, looking up unknown words when you're reading a paper-based book requires a fair amount of dedication. The time it takes to dig out a dictionary, look up the word and peruse the definition is enough to put most of us off completely.

In contrast, all three of the major handheld ebook readers: Palm Reader (available for both Palm OS and Pocket PCs, from *www.palmdigitalmedia.com*), Mobipocket Reader (available for all handhelds, from *www.mobipocket.com*) and Microsoft Reader (Pocket PC only, bundled with all new devices) provide direct integration of dictionaries, allowing you to look up a word definition with little more than a swipe of the stylus.

Microsoft Reader is currently the poor relation here, with only its free 80,000 word (US English) Encarta Pocket Dictionary, available as a free download from *www.microsoft.com/reader*, or included on your installation CD. This is complemented by a selection of free basic translation dictionaries (available from the same site), but nothing truly comprehensive.

Mobipocket Reader is better served, including a good range of Oxford English Dictionary titles. They're all purchased separately at additional cost, of course, though there are a few good package deals to be had on the Mobipocket site, offering various related titles bundled together.

The beauty of the Mobipocket system is that *any* reference work can be plugged-in as the current lookup tool. So, if you want to use the Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary in place of your general-purpose dictionary for a particular document, it's the work of just a few seconds to make the switch. It's a minor annoyance that you have to choose



Looking up a word from within your ebook reader takes nothing more than a quick swipe of the stylus

your preferred dictionary/encyclopaedia, etc. *before* selecting a word to check, but otherwise it's an excellent sytem.

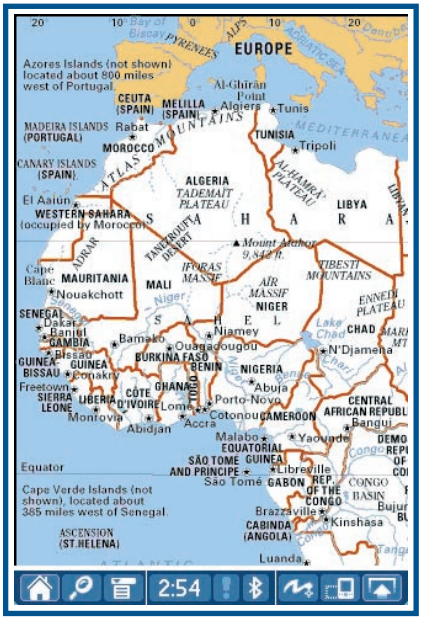
Mobipocket offers dictionaries for both British and American English, and some good quality translation dictionaries too. Top of the heap is the 140,000 word Electronic Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, and the 200,000 word (US English) Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Good reference works can understandably be fairly demanding of storage space, with the latter taking 14MB on your expansion card (or internal memory).

A fairly new introduction to the Mobipocket library, the excellent Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia contains 25,000 entries and comes in two versions: the 13MB 'basic' edition (with almost 1000 maps, photographs and illustrations) and a 27MB edition containing larger versions of the images, including some impressively detailed country maps.

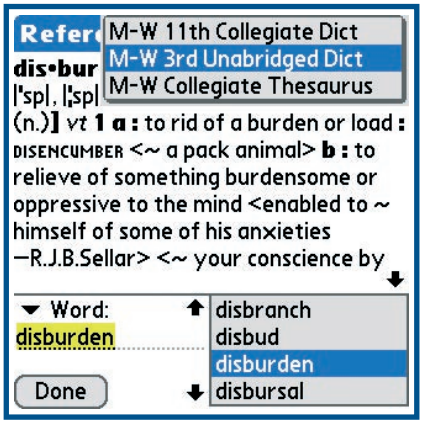
Palm Reader Pro offers the very best integration between reference works and your ebooks, allowing you to highlight a word to check, then view definitions from any dictionaries, etc. that you happen to have loaded, selecting your choice from a pop-up window (see screenshot below).

Palm Reader also boasts the biggest and most comprehensive English dictionary for a handheld computer: the 37MB, $70 Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Although it's primarily an American work, its truly collossal 476,000 entries incorporate many British spellings and words as well. You'll need the 'Pro' version of the reader software in order to run this mammoth reference tool, but it's really the last word in computer dictionaries, and runs on the Windows PC and Macintosh versions of the Pro Reader as well as on handhelds.

For those with slightly smaller wallets and storage cards, the 11MB, $26 Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (the same edition as for Mobipocket, above) is very comprehensive, and is generally a satisfac-



The 27MB Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia for Mobipocket contains some nicely detailed maps and photos



With Palm Reader (Pro) it's easy to use several reference works at once

tory tool for those requiring either British or American spellings.

A number of foreign language dictionaries are also available in Palm Reader format (several of which require the Pro version of the reader), plus a variety of specialist dictionaries and the excellent Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. Disappointingly, there are no encyclopaedias for Palm Reader at present.

Other formats

Dictionaries and other reference tools are available in a number of other proprietary formats, though they of course lack any ability to cross-reference entries straight from the ebook you're currently reading, other than by the tedious process of copying and pasting words via the clipboard. For those on a budget, there's a good selection of dictionaries, thesauri and encyclopaedias available for free in TomeRaider (*www.tomeraider.com*) format, including the recently updated 13MB, 42,000 entry 'Wiki' TomeRaider Encyclopaedia, which is a fascinating volume to browse through. Many keywords in the document are cross-referenced, which makes it very convenient to use.

Beyond dictionaries

Aside from looking up words and phrases within your ebooks, a number of good standalone reference works are available in ebook format—try searching the web sites relating to your own format for more information. For interesting facts and figures, the World Almanac and Book of Facts 2004 in Mobipocket format is always a good read, though at $40 it's rather more expensive than the (hefty) paperback version.

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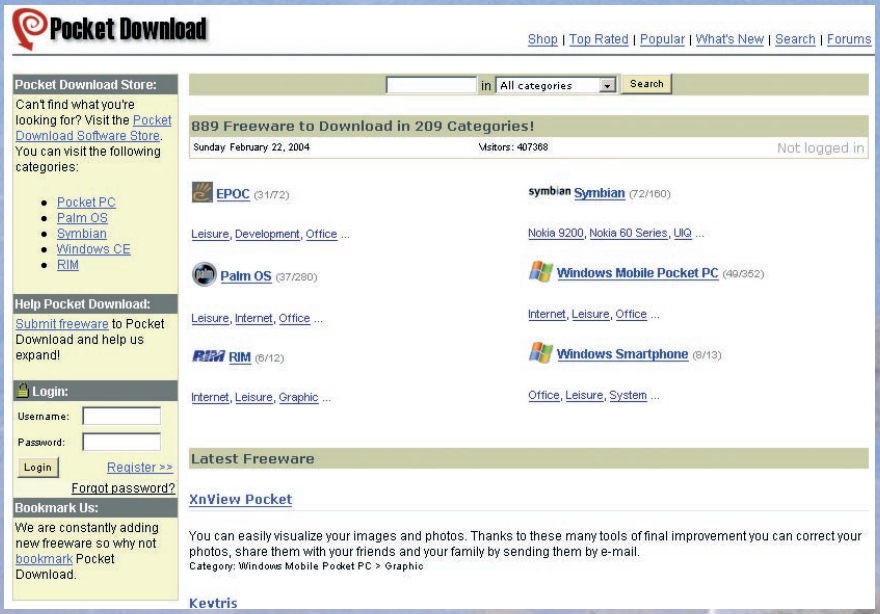
Pocket Download

Loading new software onto your PDA can be lots of fun—there are loads of handy utilities and diverting games that are eager to fill your memory. The downside? Paying for it when the trial period is up. Fortunately, regardless of which type of device you have, there's a lot of completely free software out there, and that's where **Pocket Download** comes in.

This site has one of the largest, and certainly the easiest to use, collections of cross-platform free software around. At the time of writing, it offers around 900 freeware applications in over 200 categories. That's 350 for Pocket PC, 280 for Palm OS, 230 Symbian/EPOC, plus various items for Windows Smartphone and RIM.

The site is extremely easy to navigate, allowing you to scan the top-rated software, see what's new, browse through categories, discuss software in the forum and vote for your favourite freeware application. Each application's listing contains a brief



description of what the software has to offer, the number of downloads (great for gauging popularity), the file size, date last updated, a link to the authors' homepage, and the ability for registered site users to write a review (though these seem to be a little scarce). The only thing missing from each program's page is a screenshot of the application in action.

The site makes an impressive boast that the freeware collection listed contains no crippled software and no nag screens, and if you're looking for new software without forking out a penny, Pocket Download is the place to go.

pocketdownload.com

Looking for Mr Average?

29 year old male—with a PDA? Congratulations, you're the average PDA user. As part of his dissertation, an anonymous student has been canvassing the Internet community to get some facts and figures on PDA and Smartphone usage. If you're curious about which applications are the most important and whether size really does matter, take a look at the slick results site. Software designers take note!

www.barncar.com/dissertation/results.html

Palm OS 6 cometh

We all knew a new version of Palm's OS was just around the corner (see page 10), but following the recent Palmsource Developer Conference in San Jose, California, the details are firming up. If you want to get a better feel for what we can expect in the next release, take a look at the reports and screenshots over at **Palm InfoCenter**.

www.palminfocenter.com

Get on the 'net

One of the snippets in this issue's Hints & Tips section suggests that it's a good idea to set up your handheld for Internet access in case your PC gives up the ghost. As well as being handy for emergency email access, adding Internet connectivity to your PDA can bring a wealth of other benefits, such as being able to access the web on the move, updating your AvantGo or equivalent newsfeeds, using a live chat messenger or checking up on important travel or finance information. If you're looking for details on how to get your PDA online, take a look at the tutorials for Palm OS, Pocket PC and Symbian OS on the **FileSaveAs** site. There's a handy forum for discussing connectivity problems too.

www.filesaveas.com/pda.html

And finally...

A wonderful snippet from one of the online newsgroups—a smartphone user looking for handset software to make her life that little bit easier:

"I've just been proposed to, and now find myself with 101 decisions and deadlines which need to be taken care of. I've searched for wedding software and come up with zilch. Anyone know of any? Thanks, Angie."

The short-and-sweet response from a poster known as Agent 777...

" Nope. Elope."

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Today comes to Palm OS

Palm OS

A useful feature that is missing from all but the very latest Palm OS devices is a summary of the day's appointments, tasks, emails, etc.—similar to the Today view on Pocket PC machines. There is now a freeware utility to plug that hole, 'Today', which can be downloaded from *www.freewarepalm.com*.

The view displays any combination of the date, calendar, inbox, tasks, system info and owner info, and there are many options to tweak the display to your own preferences. For example: you can choose to display the available system memory and battery status as bars in the main screen area or in the title bar, and the calendar can show the actual appointment details or just the number of appointments for the day.

There is also a launcher area where you can specify five applications that can be launched from the Today screen. Once specified, the associated icon is displayed and a single tap will launch the application. To top it out, there are skins available to match your preference and moods.

Ow Kah Leong, SINGAPORE

'Today', bringing the Pocket PC Today screen to Palm handhelds

Which number to display?

Palm OS

I often wondered why some of my Palm Address Book entries display the Home phone number in the main list view, while others show Work, Mobile or even Fax numbers. On investigating, I discovered that the number that appears in the list is simply the first number you entered when creating that particular address record.

The good news is that it's still possible to change which number appears at a later date. Just go into the record you wish to change, choose 'Edit', then 'Details...'. In the resulting dialog, set the 'Show in list' option to whichever number you'd like to appear in the list view from now on.

Sally Dempster, Warwick

Handy Treo 600 buttons

Palm OS

During a phone call on the Treo 600, you can press the spacebar to toggle the speakerphone on and off, to save having to get out your stylus or finger the screen. Also, the 'Backspace' button will hang up the call.

Steve Dixon, Newbury, Berkshire

Wireless for less

All handhelds

After getting frustrated with expensive Internet connections using my infrared GSM mobile phone and failing to find a suitable wired modem for my Palm Tungsten T, I stumbled upon the Diamond Mako Travel Modem in a bargain bin at my local computer emporium. This is an infrared modem which connects at desktop speeds, i.e. 56kbps. I simply plug the Travel Modem into the nearest landline socket, point my handheld at the modem and I can then dial-up in the usual way.

The restriction of only being able to use it where there's a landline is more than cancelled out by Internet connections which are six times faster and also completely free.

Ed Felton, Washington DC, USA

Editor's note: This modem is actually a rebadged 'Psion 56K Travel Modem', which you may find it easier to find, especially in Europe. Also look out for Casio's 'PMI5600 Infrared 56K Modem', which does a similar job.

Fully prepared

All handhelds

Perhaps, like me, your desktop Internet link is a veritable lifeline to the outside world. Most of my work and personal communications now happen by email, so the thought of losing the Internet even for a few days is too horrible to contemplate. My solution is to use my handheld (an iPAQ 2210) as a fully-prepared and totally standalone backup system. If my desktop PC breaks down or if my phone line comes down in a storm, I can be online in seconds, checking the latest news or picking up important emails.

The secret is to set up everything you need *before* you need it. Why not take a few minutes now to enter your ISP and mail server details in the appropriate dialogs in your handheld's email program. Don't forget to test the settings by going online for real. You're now ready for anything!

Terry Morfill, Ipswich, Suffolk

D.I.Y. screen savers

Symbian

It's easy to customise your Sony Ericsson P800 or P900 with your own animated screensaver image. The trick is to use the popular GIF format, used by all those flashy adverts at the tops of web pages. Create the frames individually in any convenient painting program and then run them through an animation 'wizard'. Aim for an image size of 208 by 144 pixels if you mainly want the animation to show with the flip closed, or 208 by 320 pixels if it's mainly for use when the flip is open. Copy the new animated GIF file into your UIQ device and go into 'Control panel | Display' to select it as your screen saver.

There are several impressive examples of UIQ screen savers at 3lib.ukonline.co.uk/tipsp800.htm, including one themed on 'The Matrix' (Shown to right).

Steve Litchfield, editorial staff

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Nokia partnering pains

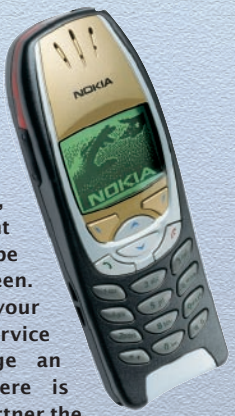
All handhelds

Q I had a lot of trouble setting up a Bluetooth partnership between my Palm Tungsten T and Nokia 6310 phone. Whenever I tried to set up the Nokia as a 'Trusted device', the phone would pop up a 'Device not available' message within a few seconds—before I had a chance to enter the passkey. After about a dozen attempts I finally managed to enter the passkey before the error message appeared, and the paired devices worked happily together ever since.

A few weeks ago, I replaced my original Tungsten T with a new Palm T3, and I get a similar problem, except that I simply can't enter the passkey before the error message locks me out. Have I been doing something wrong all along, or is the Bluetooth on my ageing 6310 simply incompatible with this newer device?

Alan May, Exmouth, Devon

A **We've come across this problem when partnering the Nokia 6310 (or 6310i) with Pocket PCs as well as Palm OS handhelds, and it's almost certainly due to the fact that your phone is running an early firmware version. For the Palm Tungsten T3, the Palm web site states that you need to be running a firmware version no earlier than 4.31 on the 6310, or 4.80 for the 6310i. To check this, type '*#0000#' into the phone keypad, and the current version will be displayed on screen. You can contact your local Nokia service centre to arrange an upgrade, but there is another way to partner the devices successfully, even with the older firmware versions.**



First, try to pair the two devices in the usual way, but simply ignore the failure message that appears. Next, choose 'Network' from the 'Preferences' screen with Connection set to 'BT to Nokia 6310'. The other network connection details don't even need to be correct, but then tapping the 'Connect' icon will cause the 6310 to initiate the passcode exchange. Accept the connection from the Palm end, being sure to check the 'Add to trusted device list' option. With the pairing now successfully achieved, all future connections will work without further prompting or password entry.

Clips and snippets

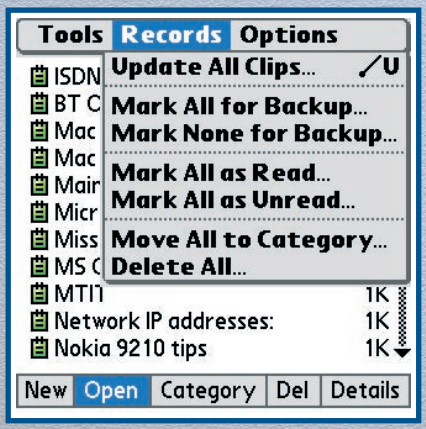
Palm OS / Pocket PC

Q I like to use my PDA as a repository for all the little snippets of information that I used to write down on scraps of paper and invariably lose soon after. I spend a lot of time browsing the web nowadays, and often find short clippings of text that I'd like to keep on my Palm handheld. At present, I just copy these to my Windows desktop clipboard, then open the Palm Desktop application, open up a new Memo Pad entry and paste in the text. The end result is fine, with my text snippets saved as individual Memo Pad entries, but it all takes rather a lot of steps to achieve. Is there a better way, either by using third party software or by creating some kind of shortcut to achieve the same result?

Ken Hammond, Stamford, Connecticut, USA

A **Probably the most efficient and flexible solution for your needs is HandStory (*www.handstory.com*). This program has a desktop component (both Windows PC and Apple Macintosh) that allows you to grab plain text, HTML or pictures via the clipboard with just a couple of clicks. The handheld application (available for both Palm OS and Pocket PC) can then be used to manage and categorise all your clippings. HandStory is available in both a limited free version and a full-featured commercial version, and incorporates a news clipping system along the lines of AvantGo, plus a basic DOC file reader.**

You'll find a feature article on Handstory in issue 4 of Palmtop User.



HandStory for Palm OS and Pocket PC makes an excellent repository for clips

Re-usable reg codes?

All handhelds

Q One issue that I don't think has been covered in your magazine is whether third party software that one has bought for an older Palm OS handheld can be transferred to a new Palm device without paying for it again. Will the software on a new model accept the existing registration codes?

Dr P Glass, Parkside, London

A **Palm software is usually tied to your HotSync name rather than to a particular machine, so when you upgrade, simply be sure to use the same name—which you need to do in order to transfer all your old data across anyway. A few programs *are* tied to a specific device, but you can almost always get around this by emailing the program authors, stating that you've just upgraded your hardware, and they'll issue you with a new registration code. A problem only generally arises if the software company in question has ceased operation and is no longer contactable.**

For Pocket PC devices, the software registration is usually tied to the owner name and/or email address of the owner, whereas for Symbian devices it's often linked to the unique IMEI number of the device. Regardless of how the software registration is configured, 99% of software vendors appreciate that we all

change our PDAs from time to time, and are only too happy to provide you with a new code when upgrading.

Opera only

Symbian

Q Following your tip in issue 6, I've been unable to get my Sony Ericsson P900's 'Message' and 'Internet' applications to recognise my desktop's broadband Internet connection. Is there a trick to this?

Simon Fowl, London

A **It's true that the built-in email client and browser insists on seeing a 'dialed' connection, but you can circumvent this and still use your desktop broadband. Create a 'dummy' GPRS account from 'Control Panel/Connections/Internet accounts' and call it 'Dummy', connection type 'GPRS'—don't bother with any other settings. Make sure 'Show connection dialog' is ticked on the Internet accounts account list.**

Now, put the P800 in the cradle (or connect to the desktop via Bluetooth), start mail send/receive, and when it prompts for which account to use, select the 'Dummy' account.

Faulty buttons

Symbian

Q The push-through buttons on my P800 seem to be faulty somehow, although they look fine to me under a magnifying glass. Two of them don't seem to push through far enough to properly act on the main touch-screen. Is it worth trying a new flip?

Mike Powell, Lancaster

A **No, we've seen this problem before—there's nothing wrong with your flip buttons. It's probably the touch-screen that's not working properly. To fix it, go into 'Control panel | Display | Calibrate' and re-do the calibration process. You should find that the flip now works.**

What's Bluetooth for?

All handhelds

Q I'm just planning to upgrade my old iPAQ Pocket PC to something newer, but I'm a little confused by this 'new' Bluetooth technology. Aside from the usual diary and contact management, I don't currently use my PDA for any kind of Internet access, and I don't really understand what's possible. I have a Bluetooth mobile phone, but how would this tie in with a Pocket PC?

Allen Stanton, Cromer, Essex

A **As you have a Bluetooth mobile phone, you'll be able to set up a Bluetooth-equipped Pocket PC to make an Internet connection via the phone, even when the two are several metres apart. This will allow you to send and receive emails and browse web or WAP pages while on the move—subject to the usual phone connection costs, of course.**

If your desktop PC is Bluetooth-equipped, you'll even be able to synchronize your Pocket PC without the use of a cable or cradle. If you don't already have one, you can buy a fairly cheap Bluetooth adaptor from any major computer store.

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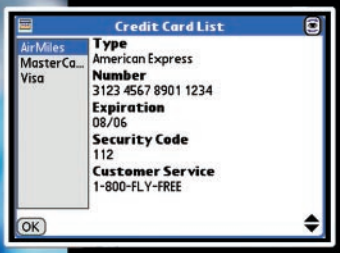

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Next issue...

Planned for issue 8:

- More hardware on test, including new PDAs and communicators from Palm, Sony, Nokia, HP, MiTAC, Sendo and others
- Wireless update. The latest developments in wireless technologies and how they will affect PDA users
- Interfacing with your handheld. Everything from non-touch screen interfaces to jog dials, voice recognition and more. We look at what's good, what's bad and what's coming . . .
- Handhelds to the max. How far can you take a PDA as an alternative to lugging around a laptop computer? Tips and tricks to help you leave the heavyweight at home
- On the road with your PDA. An in-depth look at the latest state-of-the-art in voice navigation products
- Contact management on your PDA. The built-in PIM software on your palmtop isn't always the most efficient way of keeping track of all your business contacts. We look at some practical enhancements and alternatives
- Installing software on your handheld. A seemingly simple procedure with a surprising number of pitfalls. How to add and remove programs with minimal fuss, and clear up unwanted remnants from both handheld and desktop
- Getting to grips with HanDBase—part 7

Plus all the regular features, including news, Hints & Tips, Q&A, Game Zone, Worth a Read, On The Net and much more...

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